

I wanna be a billionaire so frickin' bad.

...Not a single tummy around me would know what hungry was...

Bruno Mars & Travie McCoy (*Billionaire*)

Chapter 6: **Natural Negotiator**

“You can’t handle the truth!” That’s the famous line from *A Few Good Men*, a play by Aaron Sorkin produced on Broadway in 1989 and as a movie in 1992. Thirteen years later, the American Film Institute named this line the twenty-ninth greatest American film quote of all time.

In this play based on real events, Lieutenant Kaffee is an attorney assigned to defend two marines accused of accidentally killing a fellow soldier through hazing. Kaffee suspects the hazing was a punishment ordered by Colonel Jessup, so he presses Jessup on the witness stand, demanding to know the truth. Jessup buckles under the pressure and says, “You can’t handle the truth! Son, we live in a world that has walls, and those walls have to be guarded by men with guns. Who’s gonna do it? You? You, Lieutenant Weinberg? I have a greater responsibility than you can possibly fathom. You weep for Santiago and you curse the Marines. You have that luxury. You have the luxury of not knowing what I know, that Santiago’s death, while tragic, probably saved lives. And my existence, while grotesque and incomprehensible to you, saves lives! You don’t want the truth, because deep down in places you don’t talk about at parties, you want me on that wall. You need me on that wall.”

Jessup’s confession leads to his arrest. He is right: While the persisting need for military and prisons proves that our world is too broken for our current laws to fix, we still cannot

knowingly allow anyone to circumvent those laws, even to do good. Officers protect soldiers from knowing about gray areas. Executives likewise protect investors from knowing what it takes to maximize return on their investment and protect employees from knowing what it takes to protect their jobs. Politicians protect voters from knowing what it takes to fulfill campaign promises. And most of us seem to expect someone to protect us from thinking about how our lifestyles require oppression of other species and of future generations. Many of us do have difficulty handling certain truths.

It's not that effective officers and executives enjoy pondering difficult truths. On the contrary, they handle difficult truths by running their calculations and moving on. They are efficient and practical. They are the kind of people who pray, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." In other words, they trust whatever wisdom they have, rather than spend their lives second-guessing themselves. In the gray areas, no one is clean; one can only move past difficult truths and focus on happy ones. The "Crying Baby" dilemma from Chapter One provides a stark example:

Enemy soldiers have taken over your village. They have orders to kill all remaining civilians. You and some of your townspeople have sought refuge in the cellar of a large house. Outside, you hear the voices of soldiers who have come to search the house for valuables. Your baby begins to cry loudly. You cover his mouth to block the sound. If you remove your hand from his mouth, his crying will summon the attention of the soldiers who will kill you, your child, and the others hiding out in the cellar. To save yourself and the others, you must smother your child to death. Is it appropriate for you to smother your child in order to save yourself and the other townspeople?¹

Because many people would not smother their child, everyone in the cellar will likely die unless a third townspeople, like Jessup, makes the practical decision that the baby should be killed. However, I doubt many of us would recognize this act of murder as heroism. I think most

people, including Jessup, would avoid dwelling on it. I also think such skittishness biases us to underestimate the prevalence of gray areas. Our flourishing, our efficiency, our odds for survival, and our hope ultimately rest on practical leaders who navigate gray areas for us, yet we oppress those same heroes by making them pretend that their ends-justify-the-means approach is not in their nature.

If you are a natural negotiator, then you consider all foolishness immoral, or evaluate in terms of wisdom instead of morality. Other people get hung-up in practice on premises they consider non-negotiable, such as “I must fulfill my duty!” or “The truth must be known!” or “Such a loss could never be forgiven!” You reserve your resources for where they can do the most good. You prefer to achieve measurable goals and accumulate wealth and power that can be used to achieve them. You prioritize strategy, planning, efficiency, and risk management.

Here it is important to emphasize that natural negotiators lead both sides. It is well-known that leaders of for-profits and the military must face gray areas, but so must leaders of nonprofits and even of families. Whether your goal is profit, territory, score in a game, evangelism, stamping out hunger, or maximizing your children’s health, your success will be limited to your willingness and ability to negotiate gray areas. That’s the nature of reality. Thus, negotiators’ most formidable opponents are other negotiators, and they may prefer to be classified by which team they play for, rather than by whether they are players. But most people don’t naturally play for *any* team; to pursue novelty, love, or righteousness means relinquishing meaningfully measurable goals and competition. This puts natural negotiators in a distinct class, even if they dislike their classmates.

Your Heritage as a Natural Negotiator

By equating mental health with egoism (i.e. the dominance of the ego over the super-ego and id), Sigmund Freud claimed that natural negotiators are the only people who are naturally mentally-healthy. It may be more accurate to say that negotiation is the only independent form of evaluation, so healing non-negotiators would typically require healing their social environments (e.g. mitigating abusers, corrupt institutions, etc.). Because social health is off-limits to mental health professionals like Freud, the success of their profession often requires that patients behave as negotiators until they resolve their social issues themselves.

On the one hand, the fact that mental health recoveries often require temporarily becoming a negotiator explains why non-negotiators often mistake natural negotiators for people in recovery – approaching them with temporary tolerance, rather than embracing their permanent strength. On the other hand, it also hints at how long negotiation has existed: As long as humanity has needed some of its members to function independently, as leaders of exploration or combat, humanity has relied on negotiators.

Another hint that negotiation has an ancient track-record is our dopamine system. It is like the "reboot" switch which protects computers from getting stuck in an endless loop. Dopamine is a chemical produced in all human brains. We cannot pursue goals without it. If you get stuck in a loop, locked on goals you see no way to reach, dopamine production in your brain will decline, thus reducing your ability to pursue those goals. That will temporarily force you to shift evaluative type and allow your situation or goals to change. Natural negotiators have been so valuable to humanity that it was worthwhile to design this feature of the human brain specifically for them.

The biggest hint, however, that negotiation predates written history is that written history was invented to support it. The first writing (around 3000 BC) was used to track tax

collections. Taxes and other stockpiling of resources allowed negotiators to accomplish goals of greater and greater measure: larger monuments, longer journeys, more accurate astronomical predictions, more efficient agricultural and manufacturing processes. The practice of recording measurements as history enabled the development of math and science, which have helped negotiators anticipate the consequences of more and more complex sets of options. Such practices are as fundamental to the successful management of nonprofits and small businesses as to that of classic empires.

Accomplishments are a legacy passed between negotiators. The greatest aspect of this legacy may be social inequity – it is easier to focus power that has already been consolidated – but it also includes reusable (or improvable) technologies and elevation of expectation. The latter part of this legacy is often called "knowledge." The mathematician, I. J. Good, noted that knowledge grows exponentially (the number of years required to double GDP fell from 224,000 in hunter-gatherer societies to 909 in farming societies to 6.3 in industrial societies) and predicted an "intelligence explosion" from the development of computers which invent yet smarter computers. The growing growth rate is a negotiator legacy.

Exactly which specific technologies and legal innovations support natural negotiators has been a matter of debate among them. If some negotiators are extremely grateful to have inherited the inventions of firearms and fertilizer, others see them as a curse. Laws to prohibit stealing and murder favored nobles over the physically strong. Minimum-wage laws and the abolition of slavery favored the middle-class. Taxes favored political/military negotiators over industrial negotiators. Intellectual property and anti-trust legislation likewise support some negotiators at the expense of others. Because negotiators compete against each other, each can name some law or technology contrary to their personal advantage, though none would prefer to revert to the technology of hunter-gatherer societies.

What all natural negotiators have in common is the drive to achieve more, and their ability to do so is limited to their ability to organize others through something like governance or business, which is in turn limited to others' belief in their authority (at least in the right to own and trade property). Thus, all negotiators are threatened by movements which limit what authority negotiators can claim to have earned or inherited. Such movements are grounded in moral philosophies ranging from anarchism and communism to religious acceptance of non-negotiable rules.

As a natural negotiator, you inherit a compelling counterattack to such movements. In 1958, G. E. M. Anscombe coined the term "consequentialist" to distinguish moral philosophies which count actual control over consequences as better than mere intention to control them. It has become one the best-known terms in ethics. Non-negotiators relinquish their personal control over consequences via empathy, experiment, or trust in rules or theories about what promotes the greater good, so the best we can say about non-negotiators is that they have good intentions. But Anscombe asks, "What are intentions?" and that turns-out to be a hard question to answer fully, so it pokes a huge hole in any non-egoist moral philosophy. This tearing-down of the authority of moral philosophies leaves more authority for natural negotiators to claim for themselves.

As in ancient times, the world continues to be ruled by negotiators. Although communes and other social experiments pop-up from time to time, the vast majority of modern power is controlled by organizations which use competition (e.g. military, financial, intellectual, or public opinion) to filter-out non-negotiators as potential leaders. These organizations might not be able to offer every natural negotiator a top position, but natural negotiators like you live for measures, so you have a better chance than most to work your way up the ranks.

Your Social Importance as a Natural Negotiator

On the Saturday after Thanksgiving 2012, a sixteen-year-old boy picnicked at an empty California beach with his mother, father, sister, girlfriend, and dog. The dog dove into the water to retrieve a stick, and was pulled out to sea by 10-foot waves. The boy dove in to rescue the dog. The father dove in to rescue the boy. The dog and boy each found their own way back to shore. The boy dove in again with his mother to rescue the father. All three drowned, leaving the sister, girlfriend and dog behind.

It might have been a freak accident – diving into the surf might have been an entirely reasonable decision – but the story still reminds us how tragic non-negotiators can be. Their commitment to honor, duty, and love makes them heroes in their own way, but honor, duty and love taken far enough ultimately produce death – they are just so profoundly impractical – and society will not survive if it does not contain negotiators who will stay on shore.

Not only do natural negotiators empower societies to survive, but they also provide the lion's share of social thriving. A three decade-long study by Gallup found that about 5 million people in the U.S. are a kind of natural negotiator they call "highly talented entrepreneurs," yet do not own their own business. Businesses owned by people of this nature tend to be larger and to produce more jobs than those owned by other types of people, so Gallup estimates we could add trillions of dollars to the U.S. economy simply by convincing natural negotiators to take charge.

Such statistics by themselves do not tell us whether being a natural negotiator causes one to be successful or vice-versa, but we can get an answer to that question by looking at natural negotiators in computer science where evaluative types are manipulated. Computers are different from humans in important ways – as far as I know, for example, we have yet to build a computer that can be closeted – but computers do have GRIN types, and seeing the

relative abilities of negotiator-type computers helps us recognize the relative abilities of other natural negotiators.

To put it bluntly, winning machines are almost always negotiators. The world's greatest chess-program? A negotiator. That computer that won *Jeopardy* and is now recommending cancer treatments? A negotiator. The ones that win at the horse track and on Wall Street? All negotiators. They are all what we call "learning machines." It's no wonder CEOs are expected to present recommendations in negotiator terms – that's the kind of evaluation that wins.

Why do negotiators win? The history of machine-learning points to a plausible answer: One of the earliest examples of machine learning, called the "perceptron," was modeled after the neuron by Frank Rosenblatt in 1957. The name reminds us that all perception (and most, if not all, knowledge of reality) occurs through negotiator evaluation. Not only do most winning computers use negotiator evaluation, but so do *all* computers for vision and speech recognition. Perhaps the reason why natural negotiators usually win is that they are the only ones who actually perceive the games they are playing.

Direct sight and hearing are an illusion. What we actually encounter in reality are messes of bits of light and sound. We cannot empathize with such bits, and we have no names for them, so we certainly have no rules about them. Negotiation is the only kind of evaluation we can apply to translate the bits into guesses about what real entities might be doing or wanting to do. It doesn't take a negotiator to win a simple game like tic-tac-toe, long division, or quantum theory, but it really is the case that no other kind of evaluation can handle truth about the sensible world.

Real people each have a negotiator within them to perceive reality. In natural negotiators, that part can be the self, so natural negotiators can deal with reality directly. If natural gadflies specialize in inventing new hypotheses, it is natural negotiators who specialize

in testing them. If the naturally relational specialize in loving, it is natural negotiators who specialize in engaging in love. If the naturally institutional specialize in applying experience, it is natural negotiators who specialize in acquiring it. All types of evaluation depend on negotiator evaluation.

It is easy to appreciate natural negotiators as breadwinners who bring in resources that somehow trickle-down to everyone else, or as the targets of our yearning for leadership, but their value is much greater than that. They are our link to reality. We are blind without them. Some of the beliefs we pass from generation to generation correspond to reality, but some are constructed from our own imaginations. Natural negotiators are the ones who put beliefs to the test. They bring society into alignment with reality, thus empowering others to live in faith.

Your Needs as a Natural Negotiator

In 1991, the U.S. Library of Congress asked Book of the Month Club members which books made the most difference in their lives. Second only to the Bible, *Atlas Shrugged* ranked above *The Road Less Traveled*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. It was written by Ayn Rand in the 1950s, and offers the hypothesis that (some) natural negotiators are elite, capable of thriving without people of other evaluative types. Although that hypothesis proved false, *Atlas Shrugged* was significant for exposing discrimination against natural negotiators the way *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exposed discrimination against blacks. Here is an example:

"*You don't care for anything but business.*"

He had heard it all his life, pronounced as a verdict of damnation. He had always known that business was concerned as some sort of secret, shameful cult which one did not impose on innocent laymen, ...that just as one washed machine grease off one's hands before coming home, so one was supposed to wash the stain of business off one's mind... He had accepted the tenet that it was his duty to give his wife some sort of

existence unrelated to business. But he had never found the capacity to do it or even to experience a sense of guilt. He could neither force himself to change nor blame her if she chose to condemn him. (pg. 123)

The character described in this passage hides these feelings so as to secure the obedience of the naturally institutional who need their leaders to appear stable. Natural negotiators leverage the strengths of all other types, so they share in the needs of all other types. That can be quite a burden.

Atlas Shrugged was informed by Rand's experience in Russia during its experiment with the communist philosophy "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need". One character describes a similar experience: "We had no way of knowing their ability, we had no way of controlling their need – all we knew was that we were beasts of burden *struggling blindly*...beasts put there for the relief of whatever whoever chose to say was whichever's need. Love of our brothers? That's when we learned to hate them for the first time in our lives. We began to hate them for every meal they swallowed..." (pg 612)

The "struggling blindly" part is especially important to natural negotiators because losing hope of controlling one's own success is what shuts-off dopamine in our brains, thus forcing natural negotiators into the closet. Scientists can shut-off dopamine in rats by administering electric shocks at random. The rats stop trying to pursue any rewards or to avoid any punishments. It's called "learned helplessness." Humans experience the same dopamine loss under any unfair or non-transparent system of penalties and rewards. Rand provided an intimate glimpse into how learned helplessness makes a natural negotiator feel:

It seemed to her as if she were fighting the unpredictable cruelty of her own mind. She would lie in bed, drifting off to sleep--then find herself suddenly thinking of [strategies to pursue what she had learned she was helpless to attain]...then she would be sitting up in bed, crying, *Stop it!*--and stopping it, but remaining awake for the rest of the night...

It was the times when she could not stop it that she dreaded, the times when, unable to stand up--as in physical pain, with no limit to divide it from the pain of her mind--she would fall down on the floor of the cabin or on the earth of the woods and sit still, with her face pressed to a chair or a rock, and fight not to let herself scream aloud, while [the things she learned were beyond her control] were suddenly as close to her and as real as the body of a lover... Fighting not to know them, not to feel them, her body rigid but for the grinding motion of her face against her arm, she would draw whatever power over her consciousness still remained to her into the soundless, toneless repetition of the words: *Get it over with.*

There were long stretches of calm, when she was able to face her problem with the dispassionate clarity of weighing a problem in engineering. But she could find no answer...the longing came from the certainty that the truth and the right were hers--that the enemy was the irrational and unreal--that she could not set herself another goal or summon the love to achieve it...*Why?*--she heard herself screaming aloud. There was no answer. *Then stay here until you answer it, she thought. You have no place to go, you can't move...* (pg. 562-563)

Learned helplessness is not the creative-block, apathy, or doubt that are anguish for the gadfly, relational, or institutional. It comes from secrecy – from concealing the means by which people can help themselves. Yet to eliminate secrecy would prevent natural negotiators from protecting others from having to face gray areas. Furthermore, our society is sometimes engineered to make open honesty backfire. Thus, the relationship between the negotiator and society can be very frustrating.

Rand emphasized two specific social arrangements which produce learned helplessness. Both are situations in which the only way to get control is to appear to relinquish it. The first is the institutional policy of trusting only those who are selfless and deferential. The naturally institutional are selfless naturally, so they may fail to recognize how oppressive this policy is to natural negotiators.

In the second arrangement, a negotiator wants to please her lover, but the lover demands the subjective kind of love that comes only from relational evaluation:

"What I'm talking about can't be put into words. It can't be named. It has to be felt. Either you feel it or you don't. It's not a thing of the mind, but of the heart. Don't you ever feel? Just *feel* without asking all those questions? Can't you understand me as a human being, not as if I were a scientific object in a laboratory?"...

[To which the negotiators asks:] "Do you want...love...to be...causeless?"

"Love is its own cause! Love is above causes and reasons. Love is blind. But you wouldn't be capable of it. You have the mean, scheming, calculating little soul of a shopkeeper who *trades*, but never *gives*! Love is a gift--a great, free, unconditional gift that transcends and forgives everything. What's the generosity of loving a man for his virtues?... It's no more than cold justice." (pg 807-809)

The naturally relational love blindly by nature, so they may fail to recognize how oppressive it can be to make blindness a goal. Social norms prohibiting selfishness and analysis are cruel in the way they make natural negotiators feel out of place. Nevertheless, they are common today, often perpetuated through ignorance.

Sadly, such norms can also be used as weapons by natural negotiators against each other (as happens in *Atlas Shrugged*). Imagine a natural negotiator's first performance review: The supervisor says, "Your numbers are excellent. You are one of our top performers, one of the 20% responsible for 80% of our achievements, and the managers have taken notice of your ambition to control our success. However, you need to realize that power is a limited resource, so the only way for you to achieve your ambitions is to take control away from other managers, and they are now preparing to defend their control. You need to learn to keep your head down and play politics. I am telling you this because I like you, and I want you to be able to succeed."

This performance review signals that it will be impossible to maximize productivity in this organization; less-productive negotiators have formed a monopoly to defend their control over more-productive negotiators. Such arrangements are especially problematic in mature organizations, where there is little chance of overcoming them through luck. The most

productive employees will leave such an organization if they can; if they cannot leave, they will corrupt it.

The Peter Principle tells us that bosses are incompetent because people are promoted through hierarchies until they reach a position in which they no longer succeed. Ideal promotion would stop one step earlier, when people are performing at maximum capacity. However, if employees advance too far, or the hierarchy contains too few positions to utilize the capacity of all negotiators, then negotiators will stand in each others' way, and not all can win. That's a big problem because loss shuts-down dopamine, which leaves employees competing less practically (e.g. willing to sacrifice even themselves to destroy a competitor).

In a supportive environment, the performance review would go more like this: "Your numbers are excellent. You are one of our top performers, one of the 20% responsible for 80% of our achievements, and the managers have taken notice of your ambition to control our success. You are ready for greater responsibility, but we already have good managers for our existing projects, so we want you to help us launch a new venture. We appreciate entrepreneurs like you for preventing life from becoming a zero-sum game. Therefore, we want to give you a share of the ownership in this venture. Are you game?"

One might say that everything is a game to negotiators, and the best way to support them is to set supportive rules. If the game is to advance productivity or wellness, then it can support all negotiators; but games that are fundamentally about competing for status or relative wealth necessarily leave some negotiators oppressed. Is the game to divide the pie, or to grow it? Supporting all negotiators requires the potential for unlimited growth. That requires the ability to develop new products and services that add value, which in turn requires all four types of evaluator to play their own part. In other words, the rules required to support

negotiators are less about what's allowable than about what's possible; they are determined less through restrictions than through the will to invent, test, love and preserve.

To thrive, each orientation needs special license, and for natural negotiators that is license to take control. Not everyone can be in control. If you think it is arrogant for natural negotiators to take control, notice that they are the only ones humble enough to subject themselves to measurable goals – everyone else lives with some fantasy of righteousness, subjectivity, or imagination. Only when negotiators take control do we escape fantasy and align ourselves with whatever or whomever controls reality. Furthermore, economies of scale create positions of control that only natural negotiators (or people handled by negotiators) would find tolerable. As Nancy Reagan put it, “Presidents don’t get vacations.” Therefore, as humbling as it may be, society needs to treat natural negotiators as our best proxies for the ultimate authorities.

That said, negotiators would be fools not to involve other kinds of people in decision-making. Not only do others bring value, but negotiation is vulnerable to traps of its own. Part Two of this book describes teachings about the GRIN-orientations. Taken as a whole, they show how each type of person needs the others, but you may be especially interested in Chapters 10, 11 and 13 which are devoted to altruism, mysticism, and expecting the unexpected. These teachings can empower you to see your weaknesses and to overcome them through alliance with other kinds of people.