CHAPTER 18
PERSONALITY FORMATION

To identify our mental traits, it appears useful that we continue to investigate the differences between genetic and acquired traits. Genetic traits constitute the foundation for our existence. They are established before any acquired traits can affect us. A particular interest in genetic traits appears to be warranted because they represent our original essence. Even if acquired traits should prove to be advantageous for our overall happiness, they represent foreign modulations of that essence. They present attachments that could not exist by themselves. Beyond that, we attribute particular constructive import to our genetic traits. This quality might be drawn into doubt when we consider that human history appears to have innately been marked by destructive impulses. Still, notwithstanding that history, the underlying grounds for human survival and thriving can be found in genetic common traits. Common acquired traits may have had and may continue to have helpful or essential functions. Yet they constitute later accruals to our original genetic traits. Before we were sufficiently cognizant to react to our environment and develop acquired traits, genetic common traits had to be sufficient to empower human existence. Moreover, these common genetic traits represent the receptive basis into which all acquired traits have to be integrated to exist. Our common genetic traits most genuinely define us as human. We may have additional interest in specific genetic traits because they might show to us new horizons for human evolution. But even if their developmental potential should be inconclusive, our specific genetic traits seem to most genuinely define us as individuals. Genetic traits constitute the most tenacious and indelible of our characteristics because they are imprinted in and represented by every cell in our body. Although acquired traits achieve physiological representation as well, it is relatively superficial. Unless they modify genetic code, their adjustments to genetically based traits consist of superstructures that affect the expression of our genetic traits without changing their essence. Particularly if acquired traits arise from sensory experiences, but also if they arise from direct physical impact, they may be susceptible to alteration by simpler, nongenetic influences.

If we could segregate the superstructures of our acquired traits, we should be able to uncover our genetic traits. We should be able to lay bare a pure expression of our genetic traits by identifying and subtracting our acquired traits. By further subtraction of specific genetic traits, we should be able to arrive at our common genetic traits. Upon a cursory review, the attribution of traits among genetic and acquired

sources would appear to be largely uncomplicated. Humans universally share common genetic traits. These should therefore display themselves in commonalities among humans irrespective of their environment. They should entirely or largely constitute our existential needs. If a trait is acquired from external circumstances, we will likely detect variety depending on these circumstances. Still, there is considerable room for error in this simple investigation. There may be uniform environmental circumstances that exert matching forming consequences for the traits of all humans regardless of other variations in our environment. Particularly, basic conditions that humans require to survive may place them into similar or identical environmental circumstances. Besides that, coincidental circumstances might be similar or identical for all humans. Humans may acquire common traits from these common conditions. It may be difficult to keep causations by general conditions separate from common genetic traits, and these may be set to interact with such general conditions. We might therefore have to distinguish common genetic and acquired traits by their coding alone. A similar complication in distinguishing the sourcing of traits may exist between specific genetic traits and specific acquired traits. Unusual traits may make it seem as if certain humans or groups are genetically predisposed. But they may also suggest that these traits are caused by environmental circumstances that are particular to or shared by certain individuals. For these reasons, we cannot render attributions between environmental and genetic causes without deeper exploration.

Such an attribution is difficult because the interaction of genetic and environmental aspects tends to meld them into one experiential phenomenon. Genetic conditions may enter a reaction with environmental influences into an amalgamated trait without clear separation. While the informational basis for genetic traits is present from the beginning of our existence, the expression of this information develops in our environment and may be subject to acquired influences. Conversely, an acquisition of environmental influences must connect and therefore conform in part to our genetic basis. The supplementary character of acquired traits makes their interaction with genetic traits inescapable. Genetic traits may hence significantly participate in the formation of acquired traits. They may originate the formation of acquired traits as adjuncts to their purposes or may at least influence the shape of acquired traits targeted at them. Even if genetic and acquired traits were to develop separately, they would not exist in pure form if they focused on the same concern. They would inevitably evoke, enhance, supplement, detract from, or subdue one another. Genetic and environmental particularities individualize these interactions.

Beyond this stage of coalescence, there is another degree of a more intimate relationship between environmental and genetic phenomena. Environmental conditions may change genetic code. This effect may be caused by direct external intervention in genetic code or through mechanisms by which our body translates environmental influences into genetic adjustments. But environmental changes to genetic code may also occur without such interventions. Genetic alterations may happen autonomously within an organism. Yet, by favoring genetic alterations that adjust a species to function better in its environment, environmental circumstances may validate genetic dispositions and influence their direction. The resulting development may be regarded as a response, an adaption to environmental influences. As a consequence, environmental conditions significantly influence human genetic development. On the other hand, this influence is increasingly accompanied by a reciprocal movement. As humans progress, they organize their environment in conformity with their genetic conditions. The effects of how humans treat their environment may generate environmental conditions that influence human genetic adaption, which may create environmental effects, repeating in cycles. Moreover, environmental conditions affect human behavior through acquired traits and more superficial, often topical considerations that form our environment in turn, giving rise to parallel cycles that connect by their environmental representation. This makes it difficult to keep genetic and nongenetic causes separate over longer periods because they become inherently linked. The basis of our difficulties is that genetic and acquired traits share the same type of sourcing in our environment. Although they are differentiated by time and mechanics in their facilitation and enforcement, their formational subjection and effect may be similar. Acquired traits may be regarded as temporary precursors of genetic adaptions. The more lasting genetic reflection of environmental circumstances may only form when particular environmental conditions continue and meet with genetic capacity to adjust to them.

Our exposure to the ensuing mixture of mutual influences may cause the distinction between genetic and acquired traits to be far less clear than we might presume. However, even if we should succeed in distinguishing genetic and acquired aspects of our traits, we are likely to find that they are inseparable in their existence. Our genetic dispositions are genuinely a seed. They represent a program that requires the presence of particular environmental factors to develop. This gives the characteristics of the organism that develops from the seed a predisposed genetic as well as an acquired quality. The seed is set to use certain environmental factors. It relies on the acquisition of comple-

mentary environmental influences because its genetic code arose from an adjustment to prior occurrences of such environmental factors and, originally, is indistinguishable from such factors. In its beginnings, the combination of genetic code may have been a matter of connecting by elemental substances according to their properties and the resulting interactive laws with only basic environmental influences. The aspect of elemental reactivity has remained applicable in the development of genetic code. Nevertheless, with increasing development and resulting complexity of biological interrelations, environmental conditions have had increasingly detailing influence on the progression of genetic programming. The characteristics of organisms that develop from genetic code then appear to be as much a result of genetic programming as they are the result of environmental conditions. We may view genetic traits as acquired traits that are reflected and passed on in our genetic substance. To express themselves, they necessitate the reacquisition of similar environmental aspects that led to their creation. Environmental correspondence is also vital if a change of genetic code arises independently of environmental influences. Because environmental factors select which variations are viable and are passed on, genetic traits require the harmonizing presence of these factors to be effective.

All these interrelations between genetic and environmental influences may make their distinction meaningless in the long-term development of humankind. Their differences only seem relevant for the consideration of shorter timespans such as a human lifespan, a limited succession of generations, the continuance of a civilization, or historical memory. Relatively immediate genetic adaptions may be possible. Yet a capable adjustment of genetic code to new environmental influences during the span of one or several generations is unlikely. Even if environmental influences have a lasting effect, it is initially more likely to take the form of an acquired trait than genetic customization. Particularly our mental acuity and flexibility and our ability to shape our environment may accelerate the interchange between us and our environmental conditions to develop too quickly and significantly to allow timely genetic reaction, at least until we can securely manipulate our genetic traits. Thus, we may largely presume that alterations in human conduct during historical times have been due to newly developed acquired traits or the reaction of already resident traits to new circumstances. The speed of adjustment that acquired traits offer compared to genetic traits seems to be a great advantage. Still, fundamental difficulties of distinction remain. Distinguishing acquired traits may even gain difficulty because environmental influences may produce new acquired supplements that reflect genetic attributes differently.

In an effort to gain clarity, we might turn to a scientific manner of exploration for assistance. We might attempt to distinguish genetic from acquired traits by exposing genetically identical persons to specific differences in their environments while keeping the remainder of their environments identical and subsequently comparing their traits. If they exhibit distinctions in their traits, we might conclude that environmental differences initiated these and that they are acquired traits. This conclusion seems legitimate. One might also try to conclude that a trait is genetic if identical individuals exhibit the same trait in spite of different developmental environments. But that might not be a valid conclusion. Identical traits might be acquired traits that were fashioned by shared environmental factors and not influenced by the environmental differences. Consistent general features of the environment might find reflection in acquired traits or otherwise set conditions for behavior that might be difficult to distinguish from a genetic basis.

Even to the extent we could succeed identifying environmental conditions as causes of acquired traits based on behavioral differences by genetically identical persons, the theoretical prospect of testing for causalities and clearly identifying causes is very difficult to implement. The extensive number of environmental influences that would have to be kept controlled and identical until the formation of acquired traits would pose colossal management challenges for such an experimental setting. Determining unambiguous causal connections would necessitate a finely tuned, elaborate, and long-term planning that would have to tightly administrate the environment for observation subjects from the inception of their existence. Studies would remain limited not only due to such issues but also because they could only be undertaken with genetically identical persons. If we were limited to naturally produced identical persons, we would have to draw our knowledge mostly from identical twins. Further, we might not be able to test multiple specific environmental variances because these may combine with one another or react with genetic traits in ways that might complicate the attribution of acquired traits to particular environmental aspects.

To create a robust field of observation, we would need multiple replicas of genetically identical persons positioned in controlled environments with controlled differentiations. Yet, as complex as such an arrangement may seem, it would not disclose much. It might allow us to understand the development of certain acquired traits by a certain type of genetically identical individuals. But we might have difficulties distinguishing traits from the repeated reactions that a person keeps choosing because of being confronted with the same challenges. We may not be able to distinguish practices that have been internalized as

a need from consistent practical considerations. Moreover, we would have to subject individuals to manipulation and to control that would severely violate fundamental rights and might engender extraordinary acquired traits and behavior patterns. Even apart from such complications, the requirement for particularization to generate relatively clear results severely limits the applicability of insights. Understanding the formational results of a variety of single environmental factors and of their combinations would require an exorbitant multiplication of experimental settings. Finally, we might at best derive some understanding regarding possibilities of acquired traits with regard to individuals whose genetic setup is identical to that of the test subjects. However, such an experimental setting could not tell us which genetic aspects are responsible. Testing individuals with fractional identities to isolate these aspects would exponentially complicate the scope of experimentation and might introduce too many disturbances by different genetic dispositions to derive insights, requiring us to control these variables as well. Nor would a testing of identical genetic dispositions inform us how the same environmental factors would interact with different genetic compositions. To explore these questions, we would have to reverse the observation setting and instead introduce into identical environments individuals whose genetic code differs in certain features. To achieve that, we would have to select or produce individuals with particular genetic variations. In addition, we would have to create and maintain identical circumstances for all of them from the beginning of their existence through the relevant test period. The obstacles against achieving this are as formidable as the control of environmental circumstances for identical individuals. We would face many of the same or similar issues because we would have to comprehensively control genetic and environmental settings and the results under this research would be similarly limited as those of the reverse arrangement.

Short of extremely difficult to arrange and nightmarish experimentation, we can only observe compromised settings. We may only draw very rough and unreliable conclusions from these. Where we detect differences or congruences in personality, we might try to explore, but in the end might not have much certainty about participating factors and processes. The number and nuances of forming influences as well as among the possible characteristics of genetic and environmental traits, the complexity of possible interaction among forming influences, among traits, as well as between forming influences and traits, and the variety of circumstances in which traits find expression might not allow clear conclusions regarding causal connections. To isolate a genetic source of a trait, we would have to show that all humans who

share a trait also share a portion of genetic code that is not shared by persons who do not display that trait. This identification requirement prevents proof of common genetic traits. To isolate environmental aspects as the cause for a trait, we would have to show that all humans who share a trait also share external circumstances not shared by persons who do not display that trait. This requirement prevents proof of common acquired traits. The described manners of distinction may be competent to identify specific traits as acquired or genetic. Nevertheless, because of the interference of other traits and circumstantial particularities, large expanses of our personality may not allow an exclusive attribution of a trait in this manner. We may improve our chances of being able to attribute traits to genetic or environmental sources by constructing a database of individuals that encompasses their genetic code, their behavior, and their environmental conditions. Given a sufficiently massive database and specificity of information, we might determine at least some causal relationships between genetic sequences and environmental settings and traits. However, considering the great effort and personal intrusion this undertaking would require, it is unlikely to occur. Even if it could be instituted, the complexity of a multiplicity of possible connections may not allow us to draw many conclusive results. To achieve reasonable certainty regarding the sourcing and nature of our traits, we might have to lay open the internal causes and processes by which traits develop generally and in particular. Unless we can accomplish this feat, our exploration will have to remain largely inconclusive. This is a result of which we were already aware to some extent from the failure of previous empiric and idealistic explorations to define our happiness. But now we have a better insight into the reasons. This may allow us to find a way to overcome this failure.

The mixture of genetic and environmental aspects in our traits that precludes clarity may be a representation of important beneficial mechanisms. Genetic traits may be in large parts built to allow or require environmental participation in their functions. This is a natural consequence of the formation of our genetic traits by our environment and their function to use our environment. Yet, in addition, our genetic programming may permit or call for the mechanisms it provides to be adapted to a certain extent by sources in our environment. This enables us to be more effective in relatively quickly varying circumstances. Accordingly, our genetic dispositions do not solely enable us to acquire contributions from external sources in a tightly controlled manner. Many of them also leave us room to acquire programming from our environment and to be thus intensely formed by our external settings during our life. Our mind is the facilitator of that influence.

Because our genetic dispositions are then positioned to react to and function in correspondence with environmental influences, both sources seem to be integral parts of our mental mechanisms. The contributions of environmental sources may contain necessary or useful direction that complements genetic instructions. Not all environmental influences have solidified into traits. But our genetic code may by itself not contain all the information that we seek to define personality traits, including those defining our existential needs. As we investigate the interchange between genetic and environmental aspects, we gain awareness that our mental traits are regularly not formed exclusively by one or the other source. Rather, we find that they are ingredients in merged structures. Acquired and genetic features comprise a miniature council of traits for each trait that is characterized by two fused aspects. This tandem of features determines the issuance and direction of our impulses for each of our needs. Genetic and environmental variations among individuals may complicate the derivation of general insights regarding the functioning of these tandems. Even for aspects of our genetic traits that are identical, the variability in the substance and intensity of acquired traits that are paired up with genetic traits is likely to lead to a wide variety of composite mental traits and resulting personalities. We may one day become able to trace and understand acquired and genetic traits by their physiological underpinnings. Until then, larger-scale scientific undertakings appear to be stalled.

We are thus essentially relegated to investigating and assessing ourselves. We may doubt that we should succeed where more general explorations seem to fail. However, there appear to be distinctions between genetic and acquired mental traits that are uniquely accessible to us as the carriers of these traits and that we can use to illuminate them. Our genetic traits appear to us as more concealed because their configurations were built as a matter of events that preceded us. Our mind does not possess a record of our genetic traits or how they were built. This would appear to preclude us from taking immediate cognizance of our genetic traits until we reach scientific insights into their physiological details. Although we might possess some of this insight regarding common genetic traits, our comprehension of most specific aspects will have to await additional scientific progress. Our acquired traits seem to be significantly more accessible to us. They entered our mind through our perceptions. We may therefore be able to retrieve memories surrounding their acquisition and other processing. While acquired aspects of traits are often involuntarily suffered, the physical manner of their acquisition is bound to leave a record in our mind. Methods that probe our recollection may lead us to the mental record

left by the formation of acquired personality aspects. That record may enable us to trace these effects to their source. By recalling the origin and acquisition of acquired personality facets, we can develop a better understanding of their nature and how they contribute to or detract from our happiness. Illuminating acquired features of our composite traits also helps us to identify the remainder of our traits as genetically sourced. For that to happen with a reasonable certainty of distinction, however, we must investigate the entirety of environmental influences on our traits. The exhaustive identification of our acquired personality aspects may allow us to identify our genetic traits by subtraction. This can increase our understanding of the interaction among environmental and genetic factors in the formation of our traits as well.

An additional discrepancy between genetic and acquired traits consists in how we might affect them. Even if we could recognize our genetic traits, we might not possess much ability to change them. The genetic influences on our traits appear to be fixed until we obtain the technology to change our genetic code, the mechanisms of its application, or the physical facilities that are built according to that code. The technological demands seem to be highest in changing genetic aspects of traits imminently by accessing code sequences. We might more easily succeed in generational selection and deselection of genetic traits, although this promises to be a much less refined instrument. To affect genetic traits without such genetic technologies, we might be limited to suppressing or channeling them in their application or preempting or altering their physical results. The results of such interventions may be categorized as acquired traits. Their direct physicality joins acquired traits that are created or revised by direct physical processes without an intent to affect genetic structures or results. Yet acquired traits are currently typically acquired by sensory impressions in coincidental or intentional exposure. This may endure even as direct interventions become attainable. In our consideration, we will use the term acquired traits to denote sensory acquisition unless we indicate traits as directly acquired. The amendment of acquired traits by acquired traits appears to hold the most promise. We may further use impressions to customize genetically initiated and directly acquired traits. Acquired features may become seemingly inseparably fused with the trait they join. Still, their experiential sourcing makes them accessible to exploration and modification. In as far as acquired traits are already extant, we may alter, suppress, or remove them by supplementing or counteracting responsible impressions. Learning how acquired personality features develop and work may also lead us to a concept how to purposely construct acquired traits, possibly helping us to master our personality.

In our attempts to change acquired aspects of mental traits, we might not be able to roll back the acquisition process that has already occurred. But it may be possible to introduce experiences that interact with already established experiences to create a modified and possibly compensated entirety for each trait. It may be sufficient to bring past experiences back into our current, different awareness, placing them into context, and considering them under the judgment of our council of traits. We may not need newly sourced experiences to change our mind. The renewed experience of past influences alone may enable us to shape our traits to where they yield improved results of satisfaction. We may be able to resolve that what we came to be through environmental influences is not who we want to be, and we may be able to act effectively upon that resolution. We may be able to unlearn what we learned and diminish or abrogate the influences of selected forces. In addition, we may be able to design and construct acquired traits that we deem missing. To the extent we do not possess sufficient experiences or considerative ability to change our mind to our desired state by reconsideration, we may produce or find new impressions. By modifying or neutralizing acquired adjuncts to genetic traits or by building new adjuncts, we may modify the expression of our genetic traits. We can change our personality according to our ideals to the extent it can be affected by the presence or absence of acquired traits. This ability could provide us with freedom to shape the pursuit of our happiness in line with our ideals. In spite of their partial definition by acquired or by specific genetic traits, our ideals appear to be fundamentally defined by common genetic traits. Specific traits may accord uncommon importance to their particularities. However, our council of traits will recognize the importance of their foundations. In its context, specific traits are looking, apart from special favors by other traits, for a functioning organism that advances their existence and success. They are disinclined to support one another's idiosyncrasies at the cost of such a foundation. Their mutually critical attitudes tend to favor existential traits as dominant forces if our council's mechanisms are fully developed. To the extent specific traits advance common traits in an overall constructive manner, our council is likely to tolerate their pursuit. To the extent it considers them to be harmful, it is likely to oppose these traits and militate for their deselection, suppression, or change.

The deselection, suppression, and change of our acquired mental traits may appear to us somewhat like a second chance. Arguably, we would already have had a choice at the occasion of acquiring these traits. Because we seem to be forming our mental traits or allow their institution by admitting influences from our environment, we might

conclude that we are responsible for traits acquired through our mind. But that conclusion would not be entirely justified because our acquisitions are being determined by outside sources and our predispositions. The traits we acquire through our mind result from the correlation of two components: information and its processing by our mind. Our genetic setup creates an infrastructure of mental capacity that has yet to be shaped and organized by substance. Still, that capacity may be particularized by genetic programming and direct physiological influences. In addition, our genetic setup also gives us initial processing instructions through the instinctive mental conditioning provided by our common and specific genetic traits. Here again, the development of the genetically programmed basis may be affected by direct physiological influences. The resulting mental capacity and focus constitute the ground structures and processes of our mental activity. Not all of these facilities and not the entirety of their scope may be formed during the early phases of our existence. Nevertheless, they install initial programming by which information is processed. Information, including information that might establish acquired mental traits, must pass through these initial mechanisms. Moreover, to be effective in merging with a genetic trait, acquired mental traits must adjust themselves. Although acquired traits may supplement or change our mind, this arrangement may partly reinforce genetic traits. As a result, our mental activities, including the development of our acquired traits, are significantly predisposed by our genetic instructions. Our mind's development remains significantly determined and limited by its initial structures and processes and by acquisitions that are formed by them.

Within the parameters permitted by our genetic and our physiological conditioning, the information we receive through our senses appears to have a significant forming effect as well. Our mental capacity provides the opportunity to supplement the instructions of our genetic traits with information and programming that might ameliorate our ability to satisfy our needs. Our genetic traits inspire us to make use of our mental capacity. But even without such encouragement, we might absorb environmental information as a matter of exposed capacity. As we accumulate impressions and as they are processed, they contribute to the development of our mental structures and processes that perceive, memorize, categorize, and further process impressions. They become part of a mechanism that manages impressions based on the facilities originally built by genetic traits and amended by impressions. At the outset of our existence, when our impressions are beginning to exert their formative influences, they may be at their most effective. They are less likely to encounter entirely formed and fortified

mental configurations. Our lack of experiences renders our mind most open to formative environmental influences. Early life experiences can therefore have a decisive beneficial or detrimental function in forming our mind. They may condition us to readily incorporate new experiences and to adjust our mind to them. But they may also build conditions that integrate subsequent impressions only selectively in accordance with the mental structures and processes built by previous impressions and to reject change. The self-reinforcing mechanisms in the construction of traits are the same that cause our general propensity toward categorizing our world according to principles and of perceiving, thinking, or feeling about the world according to such principles. The hardening of our attitudes into traits constitutes an extreme result of automation that threatens to remove our response to circumstances from our control. To be effective, acquired standards by which we operate have to be policed by reflective and by corrective processes that tell us whether they are or continue to be warranted. This is necessary to keep experiences from building self-reinforcing mechanisms that fail to reflect reality. Yet, at the beginning of our existence, when such mechanisms are most rapidly built, a relative lack of experiences causes our reflective and corrective abilities to be feeble. Our capacity to learn outpaces our capacity to reflect on and correct what we learn. This weakness may not only be due to the state of our rational development. It may also be attributable to a relative underdevelopment in the definition of our needs and accordingly their functionalities in our council of traits. Together, these conditions favor the formation of acquired traits or entrenched principles that stop short of traits. The extended self-reinforcement processes of such principles and traits may make surmounting them difficult even if we are later exposed to countervailing information. Further, the proximity of our early conditioning may make it hard to connect to the original shape of our traits.

Our mind sets out to acquire environmental influences as soon as we can process sensory information, possibly before our birth. We acquire important aspects of our traits as the result of targeted influences that attempt to shape our personality. Some of that training is administered by our parents and other persons in charge of raising us. Ideally, the formative objectives and efforts of such persons would be congruent with a child's natural potential of development. They would assist a child in comprehending its existential needs and in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and possibly traits to satisfy these needs in an optimized and harmonized manner. They might impart instructions they consider to be objectively applicable to any human. To the extent general principles of happiness exist, teaching these does not consti-

tute an undue imposition on a child's personality. It merely accelerates learning, and it preempts experiences that could be unnecessarily painful for the child and its surroundings. Beyond such general principles, particularized instruction may be required to enable a competent pursuit of fulfillment. That may entail consideration for the particularized needs and capacities of a child as well as for the individual conditions of the child's environment. The formation of particularized traits may be pursued to adjust genetic idiosyncrasies or adapt a child to a particular environment. However, such influences may not be in the child's interest. Persons responsible for its upbringing would only focus on its happiness because that usually serves their happiness. Yet the pursuit of caretakers' happiness might infuse motivations that do not serve their charge's happiness. Even if they focus on the welfare of the child, the peculiarities of their mental traits may not allow instruction free of limiting or damaging influences characteristic to them.

The preemptions of a child's choices by others are fraught with risks of bias, error, and abuse. Persons in charge of a child's upbringing may have to override a child's choices during phases when its capacity to make considered and informed selections is underdeveloped or compromised, at least if the instructional worth of such choices is exceeded by damage. If possible, a selection in such cases would have to be deferred to a later time when the child is competent. Some decisions that narrow the options of pursuit may have to be made before that time according to the best available indications. But persons raising a child may be tempted to venture beyond. They might instruct the child on behalf of other interests that pursue their own objectives. More likely, they might teach a child in line with their individual perceptions, thoughts, preferences, aversions, aspirations, and fears. They might attempt to live vicariously through a child to repeat or exceed their successes or to avoid their mistakes. They may encourage or venture to create traits they approve or desire. They may further attempt to suppress, channel, or remove traits or their development if they regard them as incompatible with their own. They may intentionally or unwittingly form the personality of a child consistent with their personalities, to compensate for perceived deficiencies in their personalities, or to pursue their desires. Such narrowing of a child's focus might be undertaken with good intentions to lessen a child's pain from trial and error, from unfulfilled searching for happiness. But it might have the opposite effect because it interferes with a child's development of independent decisional mechanisms. Frequently, preemptive instruction may be undertaken under the presumption that a child shares all or most genetic traits and environmental circumstances with its care-

takers. Thus, the conveyance of information and experiences and the formation of acquired traits to assist a child in properly acting and reacting may seem helpful. However, a child's genetic traits may deviate sufficiently to make instructions not or less applicable. Even if the genetic traits are congruent, instructions may represent unhelpful or less than optimized responses. They might already have been inapplicable to the original conditions under which they were formed or environmental conditions might have changed or may change in a child's life. While formative efforts are primarily undertaken by biological parents and substitute caretakers, other family members and persons attached to families may reinforce or weaken such efforts. They may add deliberate or coincidental conditioning according to their own traits. Their influence raises the risk that a child might be preempted and used.

Besides our home, our school environments can have one of the most purposeful impacts on us during our formative years. The educational objective of most schools is oriented toward shaping the technical abilities and thus utility of students and making them compliant with governing philosophies. To the extent issues of happiness are addressed, subjects may be taught from cultural, religious, economic, or political positions held by the authorities that maintain schools. They may try to inculcate concepts that conform students to their goals rather than critical thinking or the development of an independent personality. Schools may place emphasis on compliance as an ulterior objective and a state of mind that facilitates educational objectives. They may undertake their educational objectives by imparting standardized information and aptitudes so that students can be subjected to standardized grading. They may use grading and the threat of demotion or expulsion as an instrument of compliance with their procedural and substantive demands. Hence, the formalities and substance of schooling often result in a curriculum that is not open to reflections, discussions, viewpoints, or variances and that is instead directed toward the suppression of self-determination in favor of submission to authority.

In addition to secular education, we may receive instruction in purported matters of our spirit or soul from religions. Most of that instruction is not aimed at encouraging or instilling the development of autonomous or critical personalities. Usually, religious instruction endeavors to inculcate standardized precepts of belief and conformance with substantive and procedural requirements said to secure our survival after death. Most religions institute an existential philosophy and dwell on customs and prescribed demeanor. Their authorities monitor and control our compliance with their dictates or may indoctrinate us with mental devices that cause us to control our compliance. They re-

quire by threatening us with repercussions that their postulates be accepted and their impositions followed without question. Investigatory skills and differing views may be tightly controlled and only permitted within unquestioned premises. Organizational, existential, and competitive requirements of religions may induce them to comprehensively control and direct our rational thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

Instruction and reinforcing threats may be essential or helpful to control deleterious impulses and give guidance, particularly as long as our mind has not fully developed. But if such controls do not comport with internal controls, they are a shell that may be broken or discarded. Not trusting the efficacy of inherent internal controls even after we mature, instruction may try to adjust our personality. Such approaches and even the override of our internal controls or their development may also be pursued for nefarious purposes. Either way, informal and formal instruction may be sought by forces that wish to govern us, our associations, or societies to have us serve their traits.

If government were constructed in the interest of the governed, its function would be to assist individuals in the pursuits of their happiness. That pursuit would only be limited by the equal right of other individuals to pursue their happiness. Government would be tasked to state and enforce such limits. It may also be assigned additional functions to improve overall happiness in a society. Opinions may vary on the best ways of increasing overall happiness in a society. There might be diverse views on whether or how much government should restrict and actively assist or shape individual pursuits. A society may sanction such opinions to arise and organize and to determine the functions of government consistent with such opinions. Moreover, it may incorporate mechanisms by which the rights of individuals who do not win in the contest of opinions are protected. In any event, government would be barred from interfering in excess of what is deemed to be required to maximize overall happiness. Then again, powers that direct a society may also try to create or preserve an advantage of certain individuals or groups over others. They may obstruct diverging opinions or activities to form, organize, or compete. Still, even governments that follow an ideal of constructive equality may try to manage the mind and conduct of subjects to some extent to fulfill their mission. Their function is facilitated if the governed naturally agree. But most systems of government have core tenets on which their promoters insist. To forestall their violation, they may not only install external coercive structures and procedures. They may also apply instruction as an essential instrument to maintain stability and may not shy away from trying to form mental traits compliant with what they believe to be right.

The principles that support the existence and functioning of a particular government might be originally shared or subsequently internalized by its subjects. In that case, control mechanisms can mostly restrict themselves to occasional reinforcement and instructing future generations in matters of compliance. There may also be societies in which governmental control is less extensively established or may be threatened or negatively affected by noncompliance or active dissent. In these contexts, governmental authorities and related interests may enforce an alignment with and prevent deviation from organizational structures and principles more intensely. Control instruments may be outright and obvious in restrictive rules, mandates, oversight, prosecution and enforcement against violators, suppression, discrimination, intimidation, and possibly requirements that subjects display their allegiance and backing. But such courses of action may induce dissent, unrest, and active resistance that might be dangerous or at least disturbing for the prevailing order and that might be costly to overcome. Governing authorities may prefer the subtler approach of forming and manipulating their subjects' perceptions, rational thoughts, and emotions to minimize disruption while maximizing compliance. In addition to formal instructional institutions, governing interests may utilize other settings of communication to form subjects' minds and their view of reality. Methods include the withholding, fabrication, or falsification of information as well as committing or provoking acts that stimulate conducive impulses and allow the short-circuiting of critical facilities. Governmental interests may take advantage of subjects' fears and desires. They may sustain, intensify, and direct emotions to serve their purposes. Their manipulation may cause subjects to accept false representations as true, conform, become indifferent, and act in blind allegiance against their interests. Forces that strive to assume governing power may employ similar schemes to have subjects question government actions, resist, or revolt. However, once such interests are in power, their promotion of destabilizing attitudes is typically replaced by the encouragement of alignment with governmental interests.

Accordingly, a number of formative forces may take advantage of our relative infirmity. They may generate, preserve, or amplify emotional, cognitive, and informational weaknesses that affect our capacity to judge what our happiness requires. They may utilize our underdeveloped knowledge of our happiness to implant perceptions, rational thoughts, and emotional responses. They may persuade us to take actions that are reflective of their mental traits, fulfillment status, and circumstances and that are of service to them. Although such influences might be most effective if they are introduced to us during the

formative period of our youth, they might also wield significant power over us later if we fail in deriving an applicable concept of happiness. The formation of mental traits may not appear as the result of obvious indoctrination. Environmental shaping alone may translate into the formation of traits because subjects may adjust to their setting. Even if influences do not establish firmly entrenched traits in one generation, they may create gradual generational mindsets that steer subsequent generations into ever growing alignment. Further, the distribution of parallel formative influences through several purportedly independent sources of instruction and influence may allow manipulatory interests to develop momentous influence by subtle means. It may allow them to wield widespread dominance over the mindsets of subjects.

Traditional manners of mental domination seem to increasingly compete with a wider scope of other sources whose availability is enabled by technology. Yet many of these sources may be controlled by the same interests that are continuing to manipulate us through more traditional channels. Some alternative sources might be able to stop or roll back traditional or new manipulatory influences. But they may also be controlled by forces that seek to influence us to serve their objectives. Even if such sources seem to be opposed to interests that are currently in power, it might be similarly difficult for us to determine whether we share their objectives and whether their information is reliable. If information sources are independent, have no particular offensive or defensive agenda, and have therefore no interest to manipulate information to serve their goals, they are often underfinanced and thus less effective. Even if such sources persist, we may not select or support them. They may not succeed gaining our attention or esteem among a profusion of information sources that serve manipulatory interests, particularly because these lure us into favoring them. In such a setting, relevant information can be subject to widespread confusion and dissipation. Increased availability of technology to create and distribute information may add to this problem. In such an atmosphere, professionally produced, packaged, and marketed sources of information are still more likely to grasp and hold our attention. That conditioning may hide behind the free availability of multiple sources that leaves it to us to choose among information sources. Only, what may appear as a selection of our own volition may be directed by previous media exposure or other influences from more traditional sources.

Our environment and selections subject us to powerful messages about the world around us and us. Media messages purport to instruct us how to feel good, how to become wealthy, how to be desirable, loved, successful, and surrounded by family and friends, how to

gain life after our death, how to be happy. The opportunity to influence our mind through media has long been recognized by commercial interests that make sales the principal motivation for communications. But this power has not escaped religious, cultural, and political interests. They engage in media efforts that rival, and at times exceed, commercial influences to establish, shape, reinforce, weaken, or eliminate unfavorable philosophies, modes of behavior, or states of mind. It might seem that the rivalry of causes that try to influence us should contrast them sufficiently to raise concern and doubt and to incentivize deeper investigation. However, once we are taken in by a view, it is unlikely that we will expose ourselves to sources that disagree with the positions we have accepted. Our own tendencies as well as external influences may keep us from seeking, exploring, or acknowledging contrary information. Interests that attempt to influence us may emotionalize their messages to attract and to keep our attention and allegiance and to indoctrinate us surreptitiously. They may also use more superficially emotional conditioning to distract us from inconvenient circumstances. Such forces may not expect to indoctrinate everybody. Rather, they may use rivaling positions to create much of the desired emotionalization. Opposing forces may settle to play off one another as adversaries to divide and attract a populace among them. They may find that competing for allegiances through misinformation and emotional polarization affords them acceptable control and power. The resulting conflict may benefit all such forces because it permits them to draw uncommitted individuals into their influence and to strengthen the adherence and support by their constituents. Their formal or informal coordination of opposing information and activity offerings restricts subjects' selections and moves them to instinctively take sides. This consolidates the governance of interests that steer these efforts.

The vast combined onslaught of information and even our partial exposure to it portrays a reality to us that is superimposed on ours. What we experience through media may influence us as much as our own experiences, or we may accept their content as our own experiences. We may incorporate what someone else intends to be our experiences, wants us to think, feel, or do. The placing of content into the form of a shared medium necessarily implies an intent by its author and publisher to affect the mind and behavior of the communication recipient. As communications convince us of their messages, we are being subjected to control. This risk increases with the arrival of technology that makes it possible to target media offerings specifically to certain types of individuals or to specific persons. It further intensifies as media experiences become more similar to real world experiences.

Together, the influences of powerful sources on our mind during our formative and later years place us at grave risk of being controlled by intentional programming and indoctrination. Some of these influences may be motivated by the idea that conformance with their instructions will advance our happiness. Notwithstanding, the motivation to benefit us itself stems from one or multiple needs of those who wish to benefit us. Even this motivation is therefore in danger of being biased by the needs of such individuals. Beyond that, a great number of influences are exerted to obtain a more direct subjection of others to the interests of those exerting the influence. In addition, intentional measures to influence might create unintended byproducts in their intended or unintended subjects through their messages alone, in correlation with other messages, or in correlation with preexisting traits.

Besides our exposure to intended and unintended influences by families, schools, religions, commercial interests, political movements, and governments, we are subject to less systematic influences. Growing up, we receive influences from peers, acquaintances, and friends. The frequency and range of encounters past these types of individuals usually increase as we mature. We become part of a professional and wider social environment. We connect with strangers that take on various functions in our existence. All individuals we encounter have an agenda and strive to use and adjust their environment to their needs. They might try to influence us or might affect us collaterally. The profusion of sources of influence appears to attenuate and distract from more systematic influences. However, if the same, similar, or complementary influences are widely originated or gain a widely distributed presence, their effects may compound, resonate in, and be reinforced by one another. The coincidental confluence of multiple sources of influence that might by themselves appear innocuous and separate may combine to have a decisive impact on us because they portray a consistent reality. Moreover, determined interests may generate a significant impact by influencing those who seek to influence or who influence without intent. They may attach themselves to popular sources of influence and succeed in spite of the diffusion and commingling of their impositions. Engineered and coincidental influences may reflect on acquired traits or lesser attitudes to where their content becomes the intent of influenced individuals and these are unaware that they serve others. Further, the concealing of the originators of influence by relays may preclude subjects from recognizing whom they serve. Influences that might gain momentum through distribution may therewith fashion our economic, social, cultural, and security environment and set the general parameters in which we must advance our needs.

All our direct and indirect influences form an amalgamation of acquired aspects in our traits and of more superficial impressions that may be difficult to differentiate. We may be able to identify many, in some cases maybe even all sources that have formed or influenced our personality or attitudes. But it is typically much more difficult to determine which particular feature of our mind was initiated or influenced by which particular source and how and to what effect it was formed or influenced. The cause for this disconnection seems to lie in the way most influences that we acquire through our senses form our mind. Only few experiences originate from key events that suddenly transform our mind. Most acquired influences establish themselves in small doses that are not memorable by themselves. The messages they carry become part of our inner self similar to how food becomes part of our body. We cannot keep track of the effect of each piece we consume and might not know its true composition. Our mind processes pieces of information and incorporates them into larger mental constructs. The building blocks of our mind may enter our awareness at the time they are assimilated. Nevertheless, the often incremental and concealed structures and processes to which they contribute may render it difficult to recognize them as parts of the assembled result. This can make it hard to discern not only whether an attitude or a mental trait is genetic or acquired but also what sources are responsible for it. More complications are contributed by the interaction of several factors. Messages that impress us may be compounds of influences from a number of sources that overlap. Each source of influence over our mind is likely to send out a variety of messages that contribute to multiple impressions. Influences may reinforce or they may interfere with one another or the mindsets they encounter. Mindsets and messages may change. Messages may have different strengths at different times and our mind may be dissimilarly receptive to them at different times. These effects may amalgamate in ways that are difficult to trace.

In consequence of the profusion and intensity of influences that surround us and others, individual agendas could be considerably affected and perhaps dominated by foreign influences. We and other individuals appear to largely share a fate of lacking self-determination. We all may have adopted and may execute and infuse into others foreign sources of programming. We may at least in parts be unwitting agents for the pursuit of other individuals' objectives. It is not surprising then that we might have difficulties finding satisfaction or realizing what our needs are. Our sense and pursuit of happiness may have been buried in layers of instructions, impressions, ideas, and accordingly shaped mental structures and processes that are not ours.

Our programming by external sources is so powerful because it seems to coincide with our fundamental willingness to engage in conforming perceptions, rational thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Our deficiencies in understanding us and the world and our incapacity to sustain ourselves at the beginning of our existence cause us to emulate others with little or no reflection. That drive appears to be genetically inculcated in us. We are also disposed to accept our environment as a standard of normality and tend to seek happiness within its confines. This regularly continues into adulthood. We are prone to accept general conditions and behavior around us and to fit ourselves into that reality without greatly questioning its legitimacy. We not merely gravitate toward imitating and following others if we have concrete indications that they are more competent in pursuing their happiness. There appears to be a herd instinct in us that makes us follow the example or influences of others if we do not consider ourselves able to determine clear directions for our pursuits. Although environmental sources may try to program us to conform to their wishes, we appear to have a predisposition that renders us receptive to environmental programming. Eventually, we may become aware that following others and adjusting ourselves to our environment are not necessarily in our interest. We may find out that permitting external influences to shape our circumstances, needs, and other aspects of our mind can decrease our happiness. If we let this motivate us to ascertain whether and to what extent acquired traits are in our interest, we may be able to correct them.

The abilities to reflect on and to regulate acquired dispositions of our personality may depend on how widely and how deeply our experiences have configured our mind. Arguably, perceptive and rational structures and processes by themselves should be easily changed with a proper showing that prior perceptions and thoughts are incorrect or unwarranted. Unless we have an emotionally motivated objection, we should welcome well-founded expansions or corrections to our knowledge or perceptive or rational capacity because they help our pursuits. It is more difficult to adjust the structures and processes of our emotional mind and of their reliance on perceptive and rational underpinnings. They may display a stubborn determination to persist. Our impulses may insist that we follow their directives against perceptive and rational evidence. We may not succeed in addressing these commands until our council of traits finds them to be contrary to our interests. Even then, incompatible emotional traits may resist as if they had an independent existence and an autonomous interest to carry on. Overcoming their opposition may require considerable capacity, skill, and energy and may create sustained conflict and pain within ourselves.

Our experience does not uniformly reflect that a development toward the maximization of happiness by the collective wisdom of our mental traits is inescapable or even probable. Some of our emotional traits may resist adjustment and removal successfully even if we recognize that they and other mental traits committed to them distract from our overall happiness. Some emotional traits may command our mind relative to other traits to such a degree that they exert domination or at least a veto power. They might not permit other emotional traits to assert themselves sufficiently in the collective of our traits to undertake necessary adjustments in the interest of our overall happiness. This control may not only weaken the implementation of a resolution of our council. It may already suppress the investigatory or argumentative contributions of other emotional traits and their support sphere and thus the decisional facilities of the council. The resulting weakened capacity of our council of traits may leave us with only little and undefined awareness of our mental traits. We may have an insufficient understanding of controlling traits and may sense the dissatisfaction of suppressed needs without identifying the damaging sources and causalities. Eventually, our continuing or recurring pain may provide sufficient motivation for us to investigate and address its causes.

To advance the regulatory mechanism of our council of traits, we have to become aware of our traits. To exert control and to regain control we have already lost, we must rally these traits to examine the influences that have formed us and the influences that continue a tendency or intent to shape us. We must determine which influences we allow over us and have to develop strategies for deflecting, curbing, or eliminating influences that we reject. We may undertake a similar inquiry with regard to our genetic traits although we might attribute to them a higher presumption of validity compared to acquired traits. In fact, as long as we have not identified and subtracted acquired traits from our composite traits, we can only judge our genetic and acquired traits together. We will only be able to identify our genetic traits after we have traced the acquisition of our acquired traits and understand how they contribute. But all of these activities are contingent on thorough preparatory work. Before we can pass judgment on our composite traits, refine that judgment between genetic and acquired components, and before we can engage in a judgment of remedial action, we must identify our traits. We must ensure that each trait is present in our awareness and expresses itself without restraint. Only then can we properly evaluate the function of traits or aspects of traits in relation to our happiness. The next chapter deliberates the fundamental issues we may encounter in trying to achieve the necessary knowledge.