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## Return to Instinct: The Inescapability of the Nature of One's Upbringing

While Huck periodically shows flashes of progression from the stagnant and bigoted society into which he was born, his inherent attraction and loyalty to the ways of his hometown and specifically Tom Sawyer prevent him from making an overall progression over the course of his adventures. Moreover, regardless of his actions themselves, Huck's inability to consistently act independently of Tom reveals that he does not grow into a more mature or "better" human being, and furthermore becomes a worse person. Huck effectively reveals that although people can identify that an idea is morally wrong, they are often unwilling or unable to actually rectify the wrongdoing.

Although Huck often demonstrates that he is unimpressed by the pompous superficiality of the civilized world, portrayed to him in large part by the feud between the Stephensons and Grangerfords and the phony Duke and Dauphin, he only reluctantly makes active attempts to amend what disgusts him. Huck voices his displeasure with the cruelty of the Duke and Dauphin, saying their fraudulent sign language "was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race" (173). Huck recognizes the two to be frauds as states "these liars warn't no kings nor dukes at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds" (136). Despite having known the Duke and Dauphin were frauds for quite some time, it takes the sight of Mary Jane crying in her bedroom for Huck to act on his conscience and thwart the robberies of the two conmen. Until basic human compassion kicks in, Huck shows that he is hardly a different person from the boy who joined Tom's gang, which maintained a nonchalant approach to robbery and murder (18). In general, Huck shies away from conflict: "I never said nothing... it's the best way; then you don't have no quarrels, and don't get into no trouble." This concept, however, suggests that Huck values his own comfort and standing with certain people over the well-being of the populous, highlighting that Huck has not gained perspective from his adventures and is nothing more than the instinctual person he was before he ran away.

Similarly, Huck is overly conscious of Tom Sawyer's perceived opinions, a loyalty that hinders his decision making ability in crucial moments. Furthermore, Huck is often too concerned with his reputation to act decisively, illustrating that Huck never develops the confidence to act with conviction on his conscience. As Tom reenters Huck's adventure, Huck reverts to the puerile behavior to which he is accustomed back home, showing an alarming lack of compassion for Aunt Sally. Having inadvertently made an effort to impress Tom, Huck enthusiastically recounts his tale to Aunt Sally: "you can't think half the fun [their mission to free Jim, including the spoon prank] was" (299). Huck treats these real life actions as nothing more than elements of a game,

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illustrating his poor grasp on reality. Furthermore, Huck shows a startling dependency on Tom as he instinctively accedes to his plans, mentioning, "I never said nothing, because I warn't expecting nothing different; but I knowed mighty well that whenever he got his plan it wouldn't have none of them objections to it" (244). Regardless of the situation, Huck believes that Tom always knows what is best, revealing an astounding lack of individual thought, a clear regression from the effective independent thinking he shows during his time with the Stephensons and Grangerfords.

Just as Huck is at the precipice of making his most impressive step of maturation, deciding whether he should free Jim from slavery, he hesitates enough to make clear that not only is he worried about the possible ramifications of his actions, but also that he does not believe slavery is inherently unjust; Huck's decision to free Jim is based solely off his allegiance to Jim--he never feels any higher sense of responsibility to free other slaves. Despite at least recognizing the injustices of the civilized world, Huck's inbred racism involuntarily overwhelms the progress that he makes. Although he shows sympathy for Jim, he reveals that his feelings are specific for his friend and are not applicable to other blacks. Rather than focus on the supposedly kind action he is about to take, Huck immediately shows regret, noting, "if I was ever to see anybody from that town again I'd be ready to get down and lick his boots for shame" (223). What is most troublesome, however, and speaks volumes to Huck's lack of a sense of personal responsibility, is that he realizes his predicament and still refuses to amend his dilemma with conviction. Huck recognizes that "a person does a low-down thing, and then he don't want to take no consequences of it...That was my fix exactly," yet refuses to take ownership of his decision, instead desperately praying for forgiveness (223). Ultimately, Huck proves very little about his maturation despite moments of clear growth--his indecisiveness and lack of self awareness convey his overall immaturity.

Huck's inveterate racism returns in ugly ways, corroborating that Huck has hardly shaken the customs of his society. Additionally, Huck fails to make connections between an isolated incident and an overarching problem. Furthermore, Huck's inconsistent behavior, and the discrepancy between his words and his actions, accurately portray the modern culture as theoretically rectitudinous, yet willing to do very little to resolve unjust issues. Huck's inescapable racist attitude is shown most clearly when he responds to Aunt Sally's concerns about people being injured at the scene of an explosion, saying "[nobody was hurt]. Killed a nigger" (232). Despite the general desire to be a compassionate person, Twain reveals through Huck that people are unwilling to actively become a better person, thus reverting to the "norm"-- the way they were raised. While there are certainly genuine racists out there (especially in Huck's time), Huck is not one of them. Much like many people, however, Huck cannot overcome the hindrances of his uncivilized upbringing, showing very little mental fortitude, and serving as a microcosm for a critique of Twain's on society as a whole.

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