

HUMAN(P)ITY: HOW TO BECOME A SUPERHUMAN?

By Eryk Kaczmarek

I heard the words once. "You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty". These were my mother's words, taken from the Indian philosopher and politician - Mahatma Gandhi. I was around 12 at that time.

Several years later, while I was studying psychology at one of the universities in New Orleans, I went for a walk to take a breath after the hard exams that I had just passed. It was a warm May morning, I was walking down one of the main streets, and people were passing me by to get to work on time. Someone bumped into me, but through the thick crowd, I couldn't even recognize who it was. When the situation repeated itself several times, I had had enough. I had to go somewhere to avoid being trampled by the rushing people. Suddenly, I smelled the wonderful scent of freshly baked bread from a nearby bakery, so I headed in that direction. The bakery was not very spacious, but it was known for its atmosphere and the quality of its pastries. This was because it was run by an elderly couple who always had a kind word for every customer. I was looking at the cookies when I heard something heavy strike the bakery window. I immediately turned my head and saw two men fighting. However, it was an unequal fight, due to the strength advantage of the larger one. The giant pinned his opponent against the glass and began to deliver brutal blows to his head, even though there was no defense on his rival part. His eyes were filled with rage and each punch he landed was getting stronger and stronger. At that moment, there was no difference between him and an animal hunting its prey. Yet, the thing that shocked me internally was the fact that no passerby even attempted to intervene. They acted as if it didn't concern them, as if the world revolved around them as if they were the main characters and paid no attention to the non-player characters (NPCs) around them. An example from a crowded bus that I used to take to college every day came to my mind. When an elderly or sick person who needed to sit down entered the bus, people seemed to be blind, no one even looked in their direction, so as not to accidentally have to give up their seats. The same thing happened when a drunk man entered the metro. Nobody wanted to get out of their comfort zone and get him off the subway but preferred to live in their bubble. I was different from those idiots. I was always plotting scenarios in my head about what I would do in their place - how I would give up my seat to an elderly person with a smile, or how I would urge a person under the influence of alcohol to leave the vehicle. Now was my moment to play out the scenario like actors in a movie. I paid for the cookies and headed for the front door with a plan in mind, gripping the doorknob and suddenly losing all confidence as hundreds of questions flooded my mind. *Did I really want to be involved in this? Did I care about their fate? What if he beat me too? Why did I have to intervene? There were so many people around.* I must have stood there for too long because I heard an old woman's voice behind me. "Is everything alright?". "Yes", I replied. The decision was made. I opened the door, pulled the hood over my head, and walked in the opposite direction.

I quickly realized how quickly life verified my perception of the world. I was no different from these people. I was, am, and will be the same selfish animal driven by instincts and emotions like everyone else. My mother used to say that humanity is like the ocean, but what if it's a glass of water? What if humans are like oil or poison instead of dirt? What if it's completely the other way around? Maybe it's the good people who are drops of clean water in a sea full of filth. It all depends on our point of view. Just look how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness...