

In his essay “Dehumanized,” Mark Slouka’s claim that “we are more nurture than nature” suggests that people are dynamic and open to change. Rather than having inherent or inherited personalities, a person is born with a blank slate of a mind. Secondly, his argument that “what rules us is less the material world of goods and services than the immaterial one of whims, assumptions, delusions, and lies” claims that people are governed by emotional values more so than physical ones. In the third hearing of *Darkness at Noon* by Arthur Koestler, all of the characters demonstrate a change in personality under extreme mental conditions, thus supporting both of Slouka’s arguments.

Unsurprisingly, the greatest emotional changes happen in the protagonist, Rubashov. Prior to the third hearing, Rubashov is a man of extreme devotion to his Party morals through an infallible faith in the Party. Slight doubts in the Party by Little Loewy and Richard—also dutiful members of the Party—brings Rubashov to evict them from the Party, the ultimate punishment. When he was still an active member of the Party, Rubashov expressed to Richard that “The Party can never be mistaken ... He who has not absolute faith in History does not belong in the Party’s ranks” (43)—that only mentally rugged men who could endure the peaks and troughs of history such as himself were the ones worthy of being part of the Party. But as Rubashov writes in his journal and philosophizes, he discovers the wrongs in his philosophy. Rubashov begins to feel almost regretful, and capitulates—a reaction completely opposite that of his earlier pro-Party stance. Neither his moral nor his surrendered self were innate to Rubashov; many years of revolution and civil war led to the former, and jail time led to the latter. Rubashov observes this as well: “The most productive times for revolutionary philosophy had always been the time of exile, the forced rest between periods of political activity” (182)—this “forced rest” is a mental stimulus, allowing Rubashov to idly speculate and therefore develop his revolutionary ideals. The other side is demonstrated by the extreme mental handicap Rubashov faces of lack of sleep. Rather than being able to reason his point as he did as a counterrevolutionary figure, Rubashov’s priority of sleep and rest often outweighs his need to keep fighting for his Party: he knew that “each new duel [questioning session] would end in a new defeat and that there could be no possible doubt about the final result” (226). He signs everything and simply asks to sleep as his final request. He becomes a primitive human being rather than a political theorist; the hard, moralist Rubashov is no more, is lost in the duress of interrogation.

Even the examining officer, Gletkin, shows a shift in personality as he too faces the lack of sleep that Rubashov does. Rubashov notices “a certain change occur during this unbroken chain of days and nights ... gradually, bit by bit, the brutality faded from his voice, in the same way as, bit by bit, he had turned down the shrill light of the lamp, until it had become nearly normal” (227). He is a man of utmost values as well—values of discipline, not morals as is the case with Rubashov. These values are also shaped by the environment Gletkin forces himself to; in his case, it was the interrogations with peasants that gave him the knowledge of rugged

interrogations as the most effective. But while he is hardened up from experience, the trying sleeplessness has the opposite effect. Like with Rubashov, he is softened up. There is almost intimacy in their shared physically torturous experience, despite their initially different views; this demonstrates Slouka's thought that it is environment and experience more than previous behavior and knowledge that shapes a person.

The minor character Hare-lip shows an unexpected change: the transition to traitor. While his mellifluous voice had convinced Rubashov of his sincerity, it seems that mental torture had forced Hare-Lip to the side of the enemy. Rubashov notes Hare-lip's dilapidated appearance—of which his “deep, melodious voice” (201) he felt out of place—and a sense of “fraternal trust and the dumb reproach of the helplessly tormented” (202). Rubashov remembers him as the son of his good-natured and honest friend Kieffer, but Hare-lip betrays guilt when Rubashov accuses him of lying and relief when Gletkin protects his argument. He too is affected by the torture of physical needs, and his genuine friendly nature is lost.

Even the most stubborn, clear-headed individuals have developed their theories from experience, starting from birth. Everyone has the capacity for change and emotions; it so happens that these two are deeply intertwined, with emotional stresses leading to mental change. In the cases of all the characters of Koestler's third hearing section, the characters were broken down into miserable husks by the power of mental torture. They are, as Slouka puts it, subject to change and “not minted in the womb.” People are people, not machines—adapting and sometimes surrendering to environmental stimuli is their blessing and curse.