

The Natural Condition of Humankind

In *The Sword of Imagination*, Russell Kirk has a beautiful line about the natural condition of man. It is a strong reminder that while our civilization seems strong and our freedoms are cherished, they must always be nourished and cultivated in each generation.

Here's the line:

“Order, justice, and freedom are garden plants; the natural condition of humankind is that of the jungle.”

If you're looking for context, below is the paragraph from which that sentence came:

“Much of what is called history records the fruits of original sin. Even the daughters of emperors exist only precariously. **Order, justice, and freedom are garden plants; the natural condition of humankind is that of the jungle.** In the year 316, Diocletian, who had been master of the world, was compelled to starve himself to death in his palace. In the year 1969, President Nixon was triumphant; five years later, his enemies would pull him down. It was a wonder ... that a tolerable human society could subsist at all. Prescription, custom, and convention enable generation to link with generation; but the cake of custom was being trampled under foot near the end of the twentieth century, much as the cake of custom had been broken about the beginning of the fourth century. All [I] could do was to remind some thinking people of such hard truths, and to brighten the corner where [I found myself].”

Yes, order, justice, and freedom require hard work and generational cooperation to maintain. We shall see if we can

keep the traditions alive through the 21st century.