

*The English Platonist
Vindicates the Rights of Brutes*



Contents and central ideas

Chapter 1. That God has made all things equal.	5
Chapter 2. That brutes possess reason in common with men.	7
Chapter 3. That in consequence of brutes possessing reason, we ought to abstain from animal food; and that this was the practice of the most ancient Greeks.	11
Chapter 4. That abstinence from animal food was likewise the practice of the Egyptian Priests.	14
Chapter 5. That the same abstinence was exemplified in the history of the Persians and Indians.	18
Chapter 6. On the importance of understanding the language of brutes, and restoring them to their natural equality with mankind.	22
Chapter 7. That magpies are naturally musicians; oxen, arithmeticians; and dogs, actors.	26
Suggested reading for students.	
Selections from our Down to Earth Series.	29



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THE PARTICULAR DESIGN of the following sheets, is to evince by demonstrative arguments, the perfect equality of what is called the irrational species, to the human; but it has likewise a more general design; and this is no other, than to establish the equality of all things, as to their intrinsic dignity and worth. Indeed, after those wonderful production of Mr. PAINE¹ and Mrs. WOLLSTONECRAFT,² such a theory as the present, seems to be necessary, in order to [iv] give perfection to our researches into the rights of things; and in such an age of discovery and independence as the present, the author flatters himself, that his theory will be warmly patronized by all the lovers of novelty, and friends of opposition, who are happily, at this period, so numerous both in France and England, and who are likely to receive and unbounded increase.

The author indeed, is well aware, that even in these luminous days, there are still many who will be so far from admitting the equality of brutes to men, that they will not even allow the equality of mankind to each other. Perhaps too, the will [v] endeavour to support their opinion from the authority of Aristotle in his politics, where he endeavours to prove, that some men are naturally born slaves, and others free; and that the slavish part of mankind ought to be governed by the independent, in the same manner as the soul governs the body, that is, like a despot or a tyrant. Says he:

For those who are born with strong bodily and weak mental powers are born to serve; and on the contrary, whenever the mind predominates over the body, it confers natural freedom on its possessor.

But this is a conclusion which will surely be ridiculed by every genuine modern, as it wholly proceeds on a supposition, that mind and [vi] body are two distinct things, and that the former is more excellent than the latter; though almost everyone is now convinced, that soul and body are only nominally distinguished from each other, and are essentially the same.

In short, such is the prevalence of truth, and such the futility of Aristotle, that his distinction between master and servant is continually losing ground; so that all subordination seems to be dying away, and an approximation to equality taking place among the different orders of mankind. The truth of this observation is particularly evident in the female servants, whose independent spirit, [vii] which is mistaken by some for boldness and impudence, is become the subject of general surprise; and

¹ [Thomas Paine (1737–1809) was an English pamphleteer, revolutionary, radical, inventor, and intellectual. He lived and worked in Britain until age 37, when he emigrated to the British American colonies, in time to participate in the American Revolution. His principal contribution was the powerful, widely-read pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776), advocating colonial America's independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain, and of *The American Crisis* (1776–1783), a pro-revolutionary pamphlet series. — *Wikipedia*.]

² [Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) was an eighteenth-century British writer, philosopher, and feminist. During her brief career, she wrote novels, treatises, a travel narrative, a history of the French Revolution, a conduct book, and a children's book. Wollstonecraft is best known for *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), in which she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men, but appear to be only because they lack education. She suggests that both men and women should be treated as rational beings and imagines a social order founded on reason. — *Wikipedia*.]

who so happily rival their mistresses in dress, that excepting a little awkwardness in their carriage, and roughness in their hands, occasioned by untwisting the wide-besattering radii of the map, and strenuously grasping the scrubbing-brush, there is not difference between my lady and her house-maid. We may therefore reasonably hope, that this amazing rage for liberty will continually increase; that mankind will shortly abolish all government as an intolerable yoke; and that they will as universally join in vindicating the rights of brutes, as in asserting the prerogatives of man.

[THOMAS TAYLOR]¹



¹ First printed for Edward Jeffrey, Pall Mall, London, 1792.

Chapter 1. That God has made all things equal.

IT APPEARS AT FIRST SIGHT SOMEWHAT SINGULAR, that a moral truth of the highest importance, and most illustrious evidence, should have been utterly unknown to the ancients, and not yet fully perceived, and universally acknowledged, even in such an enlightened age as the present. [10] The truth I allude to is, *the equality of all things, with respect to their intrinsic and real dignity and worth*. But indeed, a little consideration will soon enable us to account for the ignorance of mankind in this interesting particular; and will teach us, that it solely arises from those baneful habits of perverse reasoning, which have from time to time immemorial taken root in the minds of men, and have at last sunk so deep, as to render their final and general extirpation, an immensely laborious, if not ridiculous, attempt.

I perceive however, with no small delight, that this sublime doctrine is daily gaining ground amongst the thinking part of mankind. Mr. Paine has already [11] convinced thousands of the equality of men to each other; and Mrs. Wollstonecraft has indisputably proved, that women are in every respect naturally equal to men, not only in mental abilities, but likewise in bodily strength, *boldness*, and the like.

But all this, however, is only an approximation to the great truth, which this Essay is designed to promulgate and prove, that there is no such thing in the universe, as superiority of nature (the first cause being excepted); and that anything, when minutely and accurately examined, however vile and contemptible it may falsely appear, will be found to be of inestimable value, and intrinsically [12] equal to a thing of the greatest magnitude and worth.

To be convinced of this, we need only consider, that the Deity, according to the common conceptions of all men, is a being of perfect equity and impartiality; that his goodness is immense, and that he is no less powerful than good. Now in consequence of this, all his productions must be equally good and excellent; since otherwise he would be partial and unjust. Should it be said, that according to this doctrine the vilest natures must be as similar to the Deity as the most excellent, I reply, that this is only begging the question; as we are contend that the merit of all things, is in all thing perfectly equal and the same. [13]

But this will appear more evident, from the following induction: On comparing the nature of a lion with that of a man, we find that bodily strength is the apparent characteristic of the one, and reason of the other. I say apparent; for, as will shortly be proved, brutes possess reason in common with men, though not in quite so exquisite a degree; and hence, the deficiency of reason, combined with superiority of strength, renders the lion an animal equally excellent with man; in like manner, the swiftness of a hare untied with hare-like reason, puts the hare upon an equality both with the lion and the man; the advantages of flying in a bird, united with the reason of a bird; the subtlety of spinning in a spider, with spider-like reason; and the microscopic eye of a [14] fly, with the reason of a fly, will severally be found to be equal to each other, and of equal dignity with the reason and bodily advantages of man.

This theory will perhaps appear to many too abstracted and refined, and as having a tendency to destroy those distinctions of society, which seem to have been pointed out by nature herself, and to have commenced with the creation of the world. There appears indeed to be some weight in the first part of the objection, with respect to the abstractedness of this theory; for not long since Mr. Paine, who may be considered as the father of this system, was so lost in contemplation of its sublimity, that he suffered himself to be insulted in a company of two hundred persons, [15] without attempting to revenge the affront (the two hundred likewise experiencing the same abstracted effects); Mrs. Wollstonecraft, who though a virgin, is the mother of this theory, of ten, as I am told, eats beef for mutton; and I myself am frequently so lost, as when reading the best productions of the moderns, to imagine they are nonsensical, when at the same time they are the progeny of the most consummate wisdom and wit. But consequence like these, which are in reality but trifling, ought not to be objected to a system, which is founded on truth, and intimately interwoven with the nature of things. And, as to its being urged, that such a system tends to destroy the necessary distinctions of society, I answer, that it must first be proved that [16] such distinctions are necessary and natural; for there is great reason to suspect, that they are, and always have been, nothing more than tyrannical invasions of certain wicked and designing men, who wished (and have unfortunately succeeded in their wish), to destroy that equality, which the Author of the universe has benevolently inserted in all things. These distinctions indeed are so far from being natural, that the very words by which they are expressed, are evidently corruptions of more common, and less arbitrary appellations. Thus, for instance, the Greek word for a king, βασιλεύς, is doubtless a corruption of βασιλίσκος, a *basilisk*;¹ and the English word *nobility*, is in like manner a corruption of the word *mobility*; just as *praying*, when it becomes [17] social, is beyond all controversy a corruption of *braying*; as I doubt not will be readily acknowledged by the ingenious and learned Mr. Wakefield.

¹ [Or "little king," a legendary reptile reputed to be king of serpents and said to have the power to cause death with a single glance. — ED. PHIL.]

Cf. [PS 136] “. . . the Projections of the Self-willed One, which are in Chaos, compressed PISTIS-SOPHIA and gained confidence exceedingly, and pursued her again with great terror and disturbance: so some of them compressed her, one of them changed itself into the shape of a Great Serpent, another into that of a Basilisk *with seven heads*: [56 & fn.] : *Basilisk with seven heads*. The Logoi or ‘Saviours’ of all nations are represented as treading on the head or heads of a serpent or dragon, or as transfixing the monster with their several weapons of power. This represents the conquest of Spirit over Matter (the ‘Old Serpent’ or the ‘Great Deep’), which by spiritual transmutation finally becomes subservient to the divine will of the glorified Initiate, and the ‘Gods’ or powers of nature are conquered by the divine ‘Rebel,’ the *Asura*, the ‘Dragon of Wisdom,’ who fights against the Devas; *i.e.*, the activity of Manas triumphs over the passivity of pure spirit. Krishna crushes the seven-headed serpent Kalinaga. Hercules lops off the heads of the Hydra, the *water* serpent: the Egyptian Orante treads upon the serpent, while his arms are extended on a crucifix, and Horus pierces the head of the Dragon Typhon or Apophis; the Scandinavian Thor smashes the skull of the snake with his cruciform hammer, and Apollo transfixes the Python, etc., etc. All this signifies from one aspect the extension of the planes of consciousness and the corresponding domination of the planes of matter (symbolically, water) of which there are fundamentally seven.

“. . . while Kwan-Shih-Yin or Avalokiteśvara in Chinese symbology is crowned with seven dragons and bears the inscription, ‘the universal Saviour of all living beings’ (*Secret Doctrine*, I, p. 471), the seven-headed Basilisk of the text of course typifies a lower and material aspect of this type of emanation of the universe, and not the primordial spiritual serpent with its glory of seven rays, or seven vowels. . . [57]

“It is also interesting to notice with regard to the Thirteenth Aeōn and PISTIS-SOPHIA standing on the seven-headed Basilisk, that in the Mexican tradition there are thirteen serpent Gods. [59]

“Thus the last great battle commences. The First Mystery Looking-without, directs its attack against the ‘cruel crafty powers, passions incarnate’ and causes PISTIS-SOPHIA to tread underfoot the Basilisk with the seven heads, destroying its Hylē, ‘So that no seed could arise from it henceforth,’ and casting down the rest of the opposing host. (See *Light on the Path*, pp. 15-17, 1st ed.) [62 fn.]”

— *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENTARY ON THE PISTIS SOPHIA) XIII p. 56 & fn. et seq.]

Chapter 2. That brutes possess reason in common with men.

BUT AS OUR MORE IMMEDIATE BUSINESS AT PRESENT IS WITH BRUTES, and their rights, in order to accomplish in a becoming manner this arduous investigation, I shall prove, in the first place, that they are rational beings, as well as man; and in the second place, I shall enumerate some out of the numberless advantages which would arise from endeavouring to understand the language of brutes, and restoring them to their natural equality with mankind. At the same time, I would wish the Reader to take notice, that whatever is here [19] asserted of brutes, is no less applicable to vegetables, and even minerals themselves; for it is an ancient opinion, that all things are endued with sense; and this doctrine is very acutely defended by Campanella, in his Treatise *De Sensu Rerum, et Magia*, and is indeed the natural result of that most sublime and comprehensive theory, which is the basis of the present work. So that there is some reason to hope, that this Essay will soon be followed by treatises on the rights of *vegetables* and *minerals* composed by persons of far greater abilities than I possess; that thus, the doctrine of perfect equality will become universal; dominion of every kind be exiled from the face of the earth; and that beautiful period be realized, which at [20] present is believed to exist only in fable, when

Man walk'd with beast joint tenant of the shade.

But in order to prove that brutes possess reason in common with men, I shall present the Reader with the substance of the Platonic philosopher Porphyry's arguments of this subject, which I have collected with great pains, from his Third Book, on Abstinence from Animal Food, as they appear to me to be admirably calculated for our present design; and are as follows:

It is a true and Pythagoric opinion, that every soul participating sense and memory is rational, and is endued with speech as [21] well internal as external, by means of which, animals apparently irrational confer with each other. But that the words they employ for this purpose should not be distinguished by us, is not to be wondered at, if we consider, that the discourse of many Barbarians is unintelligible to us, and that they appear to make use of indistinct vociferation, rather than rational speech. Besides, if antiquity is to be believed, and the testimony of those who existed in our time, and that of our ancestors, there are some who have affirmed themselves capable of hearing and understanding the speech of animals, as among the ancients, Melampus and Tiresias, but among the moderns, Apollonius Tyanæus, who is reported to have told his friends who were present at the occasion, [22] that one swallow informed other birds, that an ass had the misfortune to fall near the city, loaded with wheat, which was scattered on the ground, through the incursions of a porter; and one of our companions related to me, that he met with a boy, in capacity of a servant, who understood all the voices of birds, and affirmed, that they were divines, and prognosticators of future events; but at length, though his mother, who as fearful lest he should be sent as a present to the emperor, and on this account poured urine in his ear when asleep, he was deprived of this wonderful sagacity. But that brutes are endued with reason, may be argued from their signifying

to each other their peculiar concerns; from their consulting for their own interest [23] with diligent sagacity; from their providing for futurity; from their learning many things alternately of each other and of mankind, and from alternately instructing each other in things necessary to their existence. To all which we may add, that Plato, Aristotle, Empedocles, Democritus, and others, who have accurately investigated the truth concerning animals, have found them to partake of reason and discourse. But as Aristotle observes, there appears a diversity in the participation only, and not in the essence of reason; the difference consisting in more and less, which many think may be applied to the nature of gods and men, a diversity between these subsisting according to a perfect and imperfect habit of reason, and not according to a contrariety of essence. [24]

So one and the same reason is common to men and brutes, but is distinguished by degrees of intension and remission. Aristotle further observes, that those animals are most prudent, that is, are most crafty and subtle, which excel in acuteness of sensation; but the difference of the corporeal organization renders animals easily, or with difficulty, passive to external objects, and is the occasion of their possessing reason in greater or less energy and vigour; but this cannot cause an essential variation of soul, since it neither compels the senses nor the passions to depart from their proper nature.

It must be granted therefore, that the difference of reason in these subsists according to more and less, nor must we [25] deprive other animals of reason entirely, because we participate an higher degree of intellection. As we do not deny that partridges can fly, because hawks soar with greater rapidity; for indeed it may be admitted, that the soul is subject to passion from its union with the body, and is affected according to the good or bad temperament of its constitution; but that the nature of the soul is changed in consequence of this passivity, must by no means be allowed: but if it is passive only from this union, and uses the body as an instrument, when this instrument is differently organized from ours, it performs many things which we are unable to effect; and indeed it is passive from the particular constitution of the body, but it does not on this account change its peculiar [26] nature. But those who affirm that brutes, in their rational operation, act from nature, do not sufficiently perceive that they are naturally endued with a rational power, nor that the reason we participate is the gift of nature, although its perfection depends on an increase beyond what we derived from nature. Nor is it an argument against the rationality of brutes, that their reason is not derived from discipline; since it is true in other animals as well as in men, that many things are taught them from nature, but that they acquire much information from after instruction. Again, some have endeavoured, and I think not absurdly, to shew, that many animals are more prudent than we are, from the places in which they reside; for as the inhabitants [27] of æther are more rational than mankind, this is likewise true, say they, of the next to these, the inhabitants of air; afterwards the residents in water and in earth differ from each other in gradations of reason. For if we measure the dignity of divinities from the excellency of place, it is equally just to apply the same standard to every kind of animal nature. Again, Socrates, and before him Rhadamanthus, used to swear by animals; but the Egyptians be-

lieved that certain animals were gods; whether this was their real opinion, or whether they designedly gave the countenance of an ox and the face of birds to the forms of gods, that they might induce men to abstain from animals, as much as from their own species; or whether this proceeded from some more secret [28] cause of which we are ignorant. Thus too the Greeks placed the horns of a ram on the stature of Jupiter; but the horns of a bull on that of *Bacchus*, and composed the statue of Pan from the junction of a goat and a man. To the Muses and Sirens, Love and Mercury, they gave wings; and they relate, that Jupiter assumed, at different times, the form of a bull, of an eagle, and of a swan. By all which the ancients testified the honours they bestowed on animals, and this in a still greater degree, when they affirm that a goat was the nurse of Jupiter.

But Fables indicate that brute animals accord with mankind in the nature of the soul, when they affirm that through the indignation of the gods, human souls pass [29] into the bodies of brutes; and that, when thus transmigrated, they excite the pity of the divinities; signifying by such narrations, that all animals are endued with reason, which, though imperfect in most of the brutal kind, is not entirely wanting in any.

Hence it is unjust to destroy animals, since they are not entirely alienated from our nature, but participate of reason in common with mankind, thought in an inferior degree. But we, indulging in wantonness and cruelty, destroy many of them in theatrical sports, and in the barbarous exercise of the chase, by which means the brutal energies of our nature grow strong, and savage desires increase. On the contrary, the Pythagoreans exercised [30] gentleness and clemency towards brutes as a specimen of humanity and pity. Again, that brutes participate of reason may be argued as follows: Everything which is perfectly inanimate, since it is destitute of reason and intellect, is opposed to that, which together with soul participates of reason and certain intelligence. For every animated sensitive being possesses also a *phantasy*, as a kind of reason; and Nature, which forms ever thing for the sake of some purpose, and with reference to some end, formed also an animal, sensitive; not that it might simply perceive and suffer, but that it might distinguish what is convenient to its nature from what is inconvenient, and pursue the one and avoid the other. Sense therefore procures to [31] every animal the knowledge of what is noxious or beneficial; but that conduct, which is the result of sensation, I mean the prosecution of things useful, and the avoiding such as are destructive, can only be present with beings endued with a certain ratiocination, judgment and memory. Indeed Strato, the physiologist, justly observes, that sense cannot at all operate without intelligence, since we often run over writings with our eyes, and expose our ears to discourse, without any attendant consciousness, the soul being intent on some other concern; and afterwards consider and pursue the meaning they contain, by recollecting what was before unnoticed.

From whence it is well said by the poet,

'Tis mind alone that sees and hears,
And all besides is deaf and blind.¹ [32]

For indeed, though our eyes and ears become passive to external objects, yet perception cannot take place unless intellect is present. On which account King Cleomenes, when a certain discourse was praised at a banquet at which he was present, being asked whether it did not appear to him excellent — that must be determined by you, says he, for my soul was that the time in Peloponnesus. But although we should admit that sense does not require intellect in the prosecution of its energies, yet when it places a difference between tow objects pursuing the one and avoiding the other, and sagaciously invents the middle term of pursuit and declination, we may justly attribute such inventions to the operations of [33] reason, and conclude, that these powers are peculiar to a rational nature, and are present in different degrees to all animals possessing a progressive motion.



¹ [Epicharmus of Kos — ED. PHIL.]

Chapter 3.

That in consequence of brutes possessing reason, we ought to abstain from animal food; and that this was the practice of the most ancient Greeks.

THUS FAR PORPHYRY, from whose perfectly convincing arguments is evidently follows, that it is equally unjust and tyrannical to destroy and eat brutes, as they are erroneously called, as it would be to sacrifice our own species for the same impious and intemperate purposes; since in either case, we injure our kindred and allies. Besides, as he well observes in another place, he who loves all animals in general, will have no particular hatred [35] for any individual; but by how much the more he cultivates justice, towards the whole animal kind, by so much the more will his equity be extended towards that part of the species, which is more nearly allied to his own. Hence he who uses all animals with kindness and familiarly, will not injure this or that in particular; but he who circumscribes justice, within the narrow limits of the human race, is ever ready, like one placed in a difficult situation, to relax the reins of injustice, and hasten into the dangerous paths of iniquity. On which account the banquet of Pythagoras, is much more pleasant and desirable, than that of Socrates: for the latter of these affirmed, that hunger was the sauce of food; but Pythagoras asserted, that to injure no one, and to act justly, was the sweetest of all banquets. [36]

But that this abstinence from animal food, which is here so warmly recommended, was actually adopted by the most ancient nations, is evident in the first place from the conduct of the primitive Greeks, as related by Porphyry, in the Forth Book of his above-mentioned Treatise, and which was as follows:

Dicæarchus the Peripatetic (says he) in his History of the ancient Manner of Living among the Greeks,¹ relates, that the ancients immediately originating from the gods, were endued with the most excellent natures, and led the most exalted lives; so that compared with us, who spring from an adulterated and base master, they are denominated the golden age; and these men (says he) destroyed no animal [37] nature. But the truth of this is evinced by the poets, who call this first age of mankind golden, and relate that every good was present to the inhabitants of this happy period. For according to Hesiod:

“Then earth spontaneous on her bosom bore,
Of various herbs and fruity, a plenteous store;
In peaceful works, then men remote from strife,
And blest with virtuous friendship pass’d thro’ life.”

Which verse Dicæarchus explaining, affirms that a life of this kind was under the government of Saturn; since it is proper to believe that this period was in reality such, and was not alone celebrated in empty fables, but subsisted agreeable to the description of the poet, and ought therefore to be referred to some cause consonant to reason, and the nature of things. [38]

¹ [Βίος της Ελλάδος, Life of Greece? — ED. PHIL.]

Everything was indeed spontaneously produced, for mankind as yet ignorant of agriculture, and of every other art, prepared none of the necessaries of life. This too was the reason why they enjoyed the greatest repose, and passed through life free from labour and care; and if we may acquiesce in the reasonings the most knowing and most elegant of physicians, they were not infested with any disease. For they found that nothing was more conducive to the preservation of health than refraining from a useless abundance of nutriment, from which they always preserved their bodies perfectly pure. Hence they did not make use of food exceeding the strength, but such as was easily subject to the dominion of their nature; and never assumed nutriment beyond [39] mediocrity through the abundance of provisions, but frequently less than what was sufficient through the scarcity of supply. They were perfect strangers to wars and seditions, since no reward worthy of contest was ever proposed to them, for the sake of which they wished to commit themselves to such great and dangerous dissensions. So that repose and quiet from the molestations produced by the preparation of necessaries, together with health, peace, and friendship, were the principal results of such a life. But afterwards the offspring of this happy period, from indulging in the desire of abundance, and from extending their possessions, which produced a multiplicity of evils, rendered the former mode of existence truly desirable to succeeding generations. [40]

But the slender and spontaneous nutriment of this primitive age¹ is sufficiently indicated by the adage which was afterwards in use, ἄλις δρυός, *enough of the oak*; a proverb most probably usurped by those who engaged the former mode of subsistence. After this, a pastoral life succeeded, in which mankind extended their possessions, and subjected animals to their dominion. But perceiving that some of these were innoxious, and others malevolent and destructive, they tamed some, and contended with others. For war arose together with this altered institution of life, which we do not affirm upon our own authority, but from the testimony of those who have compiled a variety of authentic particulars from historical traditions. [41]

And not in this subordinate age, such things as were in any estimation became the riches of mankind, which some ambitiously endeavoured to seize, provoking one another for this purpose; while others endeavoured to defend them with equal zeal and opposition. So that by gradual advances, mankind always regarding what appeared useful, passed into the third kind of life, in which the business of agriculture became the principal object of general attention. And thus far Dicæarchus proceeds in relating the ancient manners of the Greeks, and the blessed life enjoyed by the most remote antiquity, to the possession of which abstinence from animals afforded no small contribution. Hence no wars nor tumults flourished at his time, because all injustice was [42] exiled. But afterwards, together with the perpetration of injuries towards animals, war and fraudulent conduct mutually arose. So that the audacity of those men is wonderful, who are not ashamed to call abstinence from animals the mother of in-

¹ [*i.e.*, proselenic Arcadians, whose diet consisted largely of acorns, arbutus berries, and mountain strawberries — ED. PHIL.]

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ANCIENT GREEKS ABSTAINED FROM ANIMAL FOOD

justice, since it appears from the credit which is due to history and experience, that war, luxury and injustice, invade the earth together with animal slaughter.



Chapter 4.

That abstinence from animal food was likewise the practice of the Egyptian Priests.

PORPHYRY THEN PROCEEDS TO SHEW FROM THE WRITINGS OF CHÆREMON the stoic, that abstinence from animal food, formed one part of that mode of living, which was adopted by the Egyptian priests; whose relation epitomized is as follows:

These priests, who are considered as philosophers by the Egyptians, choose a place for their residence, which is best adapted to the study and exercise of sacred rites; so that a desire of contemplation is excited by only frequenting those recesses, [44] which are dedicated to their use. But they live entirely solitary, except at particular times when they mix with others, in certain public assemblies and feasts; but on all other occasions, they are scarcely to be approached. He adds, that these men, renouncing every other occupation, and all human affairs, give themselves entirely, through the whole of life, to the contemplation of divine concerns, and to enquiring into the divine will: by the latter of these employments, procuring to themselves honour, security, and the estimation of pity; and by contemplation tracing out the latent paths of wisdom and science. Indeed a solitary life rendered them perfectly venerable. For during that periods, which they call the time of purification, they scarcely mixed with [45] the associates of their own order; and even refrained from the sight of any one of them, but him whose presence was necessary, on account of certain menial employments which the exercise of purity required.

He adds, they are always seen employed, among the resemblances of the gods; either carrying their images, or preceding them in their accustomed processions, or disposing them with gravity of deportment, and in a graceful order. But their gravity was so extreme, that when they walked, their pace was perfectly equable, and their eyes so steady, that they frequently even refrained from winking; and their risibility extended no farther than to a smile. Their hands too [46] always contained within their garments; and as there were many orders of priests, each carried about him some remarkable symbol of that order which he was allotted in sacred concerns. Their sustenance was slender and simple; and with respect to wine, some of them entirely refrained from it; and others drank it very sparingly, because they affirmed that it hurt the nerves, was an impediment to the invention of things, and an incentive to venereal desires. They also abstained from bread in exercises of purity; and if they eat it at other times, it was first cut in pieces, and mingled with hyssop. For the most part too, they refrained from oil; and when they used it mixed with olives, it was only in small quantities; and just as much as was [47] sufficient to mitigate the taste of the herbs.

In the meantime, it was not lawful for anyone to taste of the aliment, whether solid or fluid, which was brought to Egypt from foreign parts. They likewise abstained from the fish which Egypt produced, and from all quadrupeds having solid, or many fissured hoofs; from such as were without horns; and from all carnivorous birds; but many of them abstained entirely from animal food. At

those times too, when they all rendered themselves pure, they did not even eat an egg. But when the period drew near, in which they were to celebrate some sacred rites, or festival, they employed many days in previous preparation; some of [48] them setting apart forty-two days, others a greater length of time than this, and others again a shorter, but never less than seven days; abstaining during this period from all animals, and from all leguminous and oily nutriment, but especially from venereal congress. They washed themselves thrice every day in cold water; viz. after rising from bed, before dinner, and when they betook themselves to rest; and if they happened to be polluted in their sleep, they immediately purified their bodies in a bath.

Their beds likewise were composed of the branches of a palm, which they called βάις, *bais*. A piece of wood of a semi-circular form, and well plained, served them for a pillow. But through the [49] whole of life, they were exercised in the endurance of hunger and thirst, and were accustomed to a paucity and simplicity of nutriment.

But as a testimony of their temperance, thought they neither used the exercise of walking, or riding, yet they lived free from disease, and were moderately strong. For indeed they endured great labour in their sacred ceremonies, and performed many services, exceeding the common strength of men. They divided the night between observations of the celestial bodies, and offices of purity; but the day was destined to the cultivation of the divinities, whom they worshipped with hymns each day, three or four times; viz. in the morning and evening, when the sun [50] is at his meridian, and when he is setting; the rest of their time they were occupied in arithmetical and geometrical speculations, always laborious and inventing, and continually employed in the investigation of things. In winter nights also they were diligent in the same employment, and were ever vigilant to literary studies, since they were not solicitous about external concerns, and were freed from the base dominion of intemperate desires. Their unwearied and assiduous labour therefore, argues their great patience; and their continence is sufficiently indicated by their privation of desire. Besides, it was esteemed very impious to sail from Egypt, as they were very careful in abstaining from the manners and luxuries of foreign nations; so that to leave [51] Egypt was alone lawful to those who were compelled to it by state necessities. But they discoursed much concerning a retention of their native manners; and if any priest was judged to have transgressed the laws in the least particulars, he was expelled the college. Besides, the true method of philosophising was preserved in commentaries and diaries by the prophets, and ministers of sacred concerns; the remaining multitude of priests, *pastophoroi*, (or priests of Isis and Osiris) governors of temples, and servants of the gods, studied purity, but not so exactly, no with such great continence, as those we have mentioned. And thus much is related of the Egyptians, by a man who is equally a lover of truth, and of accurate diligence, and who is deeply skilled in the stoic philosophy. [52]

But the Egyptian priests having proceeded thus far in the study of purity, and conciliating divinity to their nature, were of opinion, that not only men may be-

come divine, and that soul is participated by man on this terrestrial globe, but that it passes at different periods into the bodies of all animals. Hence, in framing the resemblance of the gods, they made use of every animal form; and sometimes they united for this purpose the bodies of men and beasts, and again of men and birds. For it was customary with them to represent some particular god in a human form from the extremities to the neck, but with the face of a bird, or a lion, or of some other animal: and again they fashioned another divinity with a human head, having the other parts composed [53] from different animals; applying the superior parts of some animals, and the inferior parts of others in this conjunction. By all which they shewed, according to the sentiments of the divinities, that men and beasts possess something in common, and do not without the concurrence of the divine will, from a savage state become tame, and receive their education together with mankind. Hence a lion is venerated by them as a god; and a certain part of Egypt, called *Nomos*, is sur-named *Leontopolis*, or the city of Lion-worshippers; another part, *Busiris*, or Ox-worshippers: and again, another, *Lycopolis*, or Wolf-worshippers. For they venerated the divine power which is exalted above all things, under the similitude of that species of animals which [54] the providence they inhabited produced: and on this account they dedicated particular animals to particular gods. Among the element they paid a particular veneration to fire and water, as they are the principal causes of our preservation; and this they exhibited in their temples; and even at the present time, when the sanctuary of Serapis is opened, the rites are celebrated with fire and water. For the minister who sings the sacred hymns, both pours out water by drops, and exhibits fire when standing in the place appointed for such purposes, he invokes the divinity in the native language of the Egyptians. Since therefore they venerated these elements they particularly worship, whatever possesses most of these, as participating largely of holy natures. But [55] after this they worshipped all animals; and in the village *Anubis* paid divine honours to man; for they sacrificed to him, in honour of his nature upon altars. And prepared for themselves (in a short time after the religious ceremonies) such food as was accommodated to his nature as man. From which conduct we conclude, that other animals are to be abstained from as well as mankind. — Again, from their most excellent wisdom, and from their intimate acquaintance with divine concerns, they learned what animals are friendly to men and dear to the gods. Thus they affirm that a hawk is acceptable to the sun, because its nature is entirely composed from blood and spirit: besides, it feels compassion for man and bewails his death, lightly casting [56] earth upon his eyes, in which they believed the solar light resided.

They have likewise discovered that a hawk lives many years, and that when dead, it is endued with a divining power; and being freed from its corporeal bonds possesses great wisdom, and is very knowing in future events: that it also gives perfection to images and moves temples. The rude uninformed vulgar, ignorant of divine concerns, doubtless abhors the *κάνθαρος* or beetle;¹ but the

¹ [i.e., *Scarabæus ptilularius* (Linnæus 1758) and other species — ED. PHIL.]

Egyptians worship it as a living image of the sun. For every beetle is of the male kind, but drops its offspring in the mud, which it fashions into a spherical shape; and moves round it in a retrograde course, like the sun in the heavens. And in this manner [57] it remains expecting the conclusion of twenty-eight days, that is, a lunar period. After the same manner, the ram, the crocodile, the vulture, the ibis, and universally all animals, were the subjects of their philosophical disquisitions. So that in consequence of their wisdom, and great knowledge of divine concerns, they at length came to animal worship. But the unlettered man is perfectly ignorant by what means they preserved themselves from being carried away by vulgar folly; how they deserted the paths of ignorance frequented by the multitude; and admitted as a part of their worship things of no general estimation.

But this consideration, no less than the preceding observations, strengthened their [58] belief in the propriety of animal worship: I mean their discovering, that the souls of all animals when freed from body are endued with reason; an President of future events; possess a prophetic power, and are capable of all the various operations of man, when divested of his corporeal bonds. Hence they justly revered all animals, and as much as possible abstained from using them in food. But as the Egyptians worshipping the gods through the medium of animals, requires much investigation, and far more than the limits of this work will admit, what has been already revealed concerning their mysteries must suffice our present design.



Chapter 5.

That the same abstinence was exemplified in the history of the Persians and Indians.

AGAIN, SAYS PORPHYRY, among the Persians, those who are wise in divine concerns and priests of divinity, are called Magi. For such is the signification of the word according to the Persian dialect. But so august and venerable is this class of men among the Persians, that Darius, the son of Hystaspis, ordered this, among other things, to be inscribed on his tomb, that he was the master of magic. These Magi, according to Eubulus, who composed the History of Mithras, in many books, are divided into three kind; the [60] first and most learned of which sects, neither eat nor destroy animals, but adhere to the ancient abstinence from animal food. But the Magi of the second order, destroy animals indeed, but not such as are tame. Nor do those of the third order equally feed on all kinds. The first and greatest dogma of all these tribes is, the doctrine of the metempsychosis of Mithras; insinuating the agreement of our nature with that of other animals, by calling themselves by their names. Thus they denominate the male Mystics, who participate of their orgies or sacred rites, lions, but the female lionesses, and the servants of the priest, ravens. And the same custom obtains in preserving the remembrance of their fathers, for the denominate these hawks and eagles, but [61] he who is initiated in those rites, of which a lion is the symbol, is invested with all the various kinds of animal forms. This custom Pallas, in the books which he composed concerning Mithras, accounts for, by saying, that common people thought it respected the circle of the zodiac, but that the true and accurate opinion is, that they insinuated by this custom, the transmigration of human souls into all the different orders of bodies. He adds, the Romans call some men by the names of boars, goats, and black-birds, and denominate in a similar manner, the gods, the artificers of these. Thus they call Diana, lupa, or a she-wolf, but to the sun, they give the appellations of a bull, a lion, a dragon, and a hawk; and to Hecate, the names [62] of a horse, a bull, a lioness and a dog. But the Greek name of Proserpine, Περσεφόνη, according to many theologians, is derived from περιστερά, or nourishing wood-pigeons. For this bird is sacred to Hecate. Hence a wood-pigeon is dedicated to the goddess Maia by her priests; and Maia is the same with Proserpine, because she is both a mother and a nurse. For the terrestrial goddess and Ceres are one and the same, to whom they consecrate a cock: and hence, those who are initiated in the mysteries of this goddess, abstain from domestic birds. For it is ordered in the Eleusinian rites, that the initiated refrain from cooped-up birds, from fish, beans, and pomegranates; for they reckon it equally as defiling, to touch the truck of this fruit-tree as a dead [63] body. But he who knows the nature of appearances, knows likewise, why it is requisite to abstain from all birds; especially for him who hastens to be freed from terrestrial concerns, and to swell with the celestial gods. But improbity, as we have often observed, is powerful in defending itself, and especially when it addresses the ignorant. Hence it is, that they who keep the middle rank among the base part of mankind, esteem this exhortation from animal food, as vain and empty, and similar as it is said, to the trifling of an old woman's discourse; while others, who are something farther advanced in improbity, are not only prepared to rail bitterly at those who recommend and excite mankind to such and abstemious life, but also to calumniate such [64] a conduct, as imposture

and arrogant presumption. However, men of this kind will suffer the just punishment of their crimes both from gods and men; and prior to this, will sufficiently punish themselves by such material affections.

But we shall now proceed to another instance of a foreign nation, highly celebrated, just and religious in divine concerns, which abstained from animals food: and this is the republic of the Indians.

This republic then, says Porphyry, is distributed into many parts; one of which comprehends that kind of theologians, denominated by the Greeks, Gymnosophists. But of these there are two sects, on call Brahmans, the other Samanean. [65]

The family of the Brahmans succeed as regularly in the profession of this divine wisdom, as to the office of the priesthood. But the Samaneans are chosen for this institution; and their number supplied from among those who desire to apply themselves to theology. The institutes of these men are as follows, according to the writings of Bardesanes, the Babylonian, who lived in the times of our fathers, and in India became acquainted with the associates of Damadamis, who were sent to Cæsar. All the Brahmans, says he, originate from the same stock as they all descend from the same father and mother. But the Samaneans are not of the same kind, but as we have already observed, are collected from every tribe of Indians. A Brahman [66] is subject to no command, and is free from the exaction of tribute. But among these philosophers, some inhabit mountains, while other reside on the banks of the river Ganges: and they subsist on mountainous autumnal fruits, and on certain herbs, formed into a concretion with milk. Those who dwell near the Ganges, live on the fruits which are produced in great abundance about that river; but the earth bears almost continually recent fruit, and besides this, much rice, spontaneously produced, which they use when there is any deficiency of fruit; and they esteem it extremely impure and impious, to subsist on any other kind of nutriment, or even to touch animal food. This opinion subsists among those who worship divinity, and exercise piety. [67]

Hence they devote the day, and the greatest part of the night, to the sacred employment of singing hymns, and praying to the gods, each of them possessing a small cottage, as much as possible buried in the depths of solitude; for the Brahmans cannot endure to dwell together, nor to speak much; but whenever this congress and discourse with each other happens, returning afterwards to their accustomed retirement, they entirely refrain for many days together from all discourse; they likewise often fast; but the Samaneans, as we have observed, are chosen from other tribes; and when any person desires to be enrolled in that order, he goes to the master of the city, and immediately abdicates the city or street in which he resided, and relinquishes whatever wealth [68] and abundance he possesses. In the next place, purifying his body from all defilements, and being invested with a robe, he departs to the Samaneans, who afterwards returning to his wife or children, (if he happens to be connected with either of these) nor concerning himself about them, nor considering them as any longer pertaining to him; but the King takes care of the children, and procures them necessary instruction; and the support of his wife devolves on her relations. Their manner of living too is as follows; they dwell without the city, exercising themselves throughout the day in discourse concerning the Deity; and they are furnished with groves and temples, raised by royal bounty, in which there are do-

mestic stewards paid by the King, for the purpose [69] of supplying those with food who assemble in these places; but the apparatus of their nutriment consists of rice, bread, apples and olives. When they enter into their houses, on the ringing of a small bell, those who are not of their sect depart, and the Samaneans begin to pray: afterwards, a signal being again given by the bell, they distribute to everyone a dish or pan, (for two are not permitted to eat out of the same vessel) and feed them from rice. If anyone desires variety of food, he has some pot-herbs added, or some autumnal fruits; but as soon as the wants of nature are supplied, they depart without delay to the same divine exercise. They all live without wives, and without possessing any external abundance; and other Indians regard this [70] sect, and that of the Brahmans, with such high veneration, that the King himself visits them; and begs that they will pray to and supplicate the gods, (when enemies assault the kingdom) or give him such counsel as the situation of his affairs requires.

These philosophers are so affected towards death, that they bear with reluctance the whole of the present life, as a certain necessary service of nature; and hasten with the greatest eagerness to a liberation of their souls from the bondage of body. Hence, when they perceive their corporeal part in a flourishing condition, and are free from the incursions of evil, they are spontaneously depart from the present life; and though they [71] previously declare their intention to others, yet no one prevents them in its execution; but the Gymnosophists pronounce all those who are dead happy, and deliver certain instructions to the familiars of the deceased. So that the vulgar as well as those philosophers, from their mode of education, are firmly persuaded that souls converse with each other after death. But the friends of the deceased, after the charge given by the Gymnosophists, commit the body to fire, that the soul may be separated with the greatest possible purity from its connections with the body, and conclude the service by signing a hymn. For indeed these men commit their dearest friends to the embraces of death with far greater cheerfulness, than others endure the departure of their fellow-citizens to [72] some distance country. At the same time they lament their own situation, as yet abiding in morality; and proclaim the happiness of the deceased, who have now obtained an immortal condition of being.

Thus far the excellent Porphyry, from all which it evidently follows, that abstinence from animal nutriment, which is the natural consequence of our sublime theory, is by no means a novelty, but may be justified by the practice of the wisest and best of men, in the earliest periods of time. But it may perhaps be objected, that according to my system, vegetables likewise ought not to be destroyed, and eaten, on account of their perfect equality with the nature of brutes [73] and men. To this I answer, that the life of a plant is in itself so inconsiderable, (though this deficiency is amply recompensed by the beautiful organization of its corporeal frame) that it cannot be supposed to suffer any pain in its deception; and consequently is not in reality injured, by being made subservient to the nourishment of man and beast. Indeed it is much to be wished, that we could abstain from a vegetable aliment, without any inconvenience to our composition; and that like Homer's deities, we are superior to the want of meat and drink, that we might become truly immortal: or that we could procure for our nature, what is celebrated in fables, a remedy against hunger and thirst; and that stopping the flowing condition of our body, [74] which, like an ever-running stream, is continually rolling into the dark sea of matter, as into the abyss of non-

DOWN TO EARTH SERIES
ANCIENT PERSIANS AND INDIANS ABSTAINED FROM ANIMAL FOOD

entity, we could immediately be present with the best and most exalted natures, and rise to that condition of being, in which he, who is conjoined by an ineffable union with the deity, is himself a god. But this indeed, is one of Porphyry's ecstasies, who being a Platonist, was of course subject to uncommon flights.



Chapter 6.

On the importance of understanding the language of brutes, and restoring them to their natural equality with mankind.

BUT IT IS NOW TIME TO CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF BRUTES; for it is already evident from Porphyry, that they have a language of their own, and that it may be understood by mankind. In order therefore to accomplish this design in the most perfect manner, I shall produce a variety of curious histories of brutal sagacity, from the writings of Plutarch; and shew how mankind may be benefited by associating with brutes, as on a level with themselves. [76]

And that I may first of all please the ladies, I shall begin with the elephant, a beast by nature very amorous; and from his prodigious size, very well calculated to become the darling of our modern virgins, who having wisely laid aside the foolish veils of antiquity, and have assumed greater boldness, are seldom intimidated at anything uncommonly large. Plutarch then, in that treatise of his, in which he contracts the sagacity of land animals, with that of the aquatic species, observes, concerning the amours of brutes, that some are furious and mad; but that others observe a kind of human decency, united with a very courtly kind of conversation. [77]

Such (says he) was the amour of the elephant at Alexandria, that rivalled Aristophanes the grammarian. For they were both in love with a virgin that sold garlands: nor was the elephant's courtship less conspicuous than the grammarian's. For as he passed through the fruit-market, he always brought her apples, and stayed with her for some time: and besides this, thrusting his proboscis within her waistcoat, as a substitute for a hand, took great delight in gently feeling her breasts.

From this instance, it may be fairly concluded, that if elephants were to associate with ladies in common (each at the same time understanding the other's language) great and unexampled gallantries [78] would take place on each side, and a mixt kind of species would be produced, in which the enchanting elegance of woman would be united with the prodigious strength and terrific bulk of the elephant.

No less charming, likewise, would be the advantages arising from an association of the fair sex with dragons, as is evident from the History of the Dragon, who was in love with an Ætolian woman. For he used (says Plutarch) to visit her in the night, and creeping under her garments to her very skin, embraced her naked body; and never, either voluntarily or involuntarily, injured her, but always departed very gallantly about break of day, but the relations of the [79] woman observing that this was the custom of the dragon, removed her to a considerable distance from this amorous spot. After this the dragon was not seen for the space of three or four days; being all this time, as it seemed, wandering in search of her. But a length having with great difficulty found out the place of her abode, he accosted her somewhat less gallant and gentle than before; and with the folds of his body, having first bound her hands and arms, he lashed the calves of her legs, with the end of his tail; expressing by this means a gentle and loving anger, which contained more of indulgent expostulation than punishment. [80]

Plutarch adds, that he shall say nothing respecting a goose in Egypt in love with a boy; nor of the ram in love with Glauce that played on the harp, because, (says he) the story is well known to everyone. Indeed the instances already adduced are sufficient to convince the sagacious reader, that prodigious benefits must arise from the mutual converse and copulation of species, which have hitherto been considered as unallied and inimical to each other.

And here I cannot refrain from mentioning a most singular advantage, which would arise from an association with dogs, when their language is perfectly understood by us; the advantage I allude to, respects a thing of no less importance than [81] the instruction of youth in one of the most interesting particulars belonging to juvenile tuition. Everyone knows how universally prevalent the practice of self-pollution is become amongst children; and how dreadful its consequences are in debilitating the constitution, and corrupting the morals of the unhappy youths who are the votaries of this detestable vice. Now that extraordinary genius, Mrs. Wollstonecraft, proposes the following remedy for this pernicious practice, in that great work of hers, called, *Elements of Morality for Children*:¹

I am thoroughly persuaded (says she) that the most efficacious method to root out this dreadful evil, which poisons the source of humane happiness, would be to speak to children [82] of the organs of generation as freely as we speak of the other parts of the body, and explain to them the noble use, which they were designed for, and how they may be injured.

She adds,

I have conversed with the most sensible schoolmasters on this subject, and they have confirmed me in my opinion.

This plan is beyond all doubt a most striking proof of her uncommon capacity, and the truth of her grand theory, *the equality of the female nature with the male*; for whoever considers this affair with the attention it deserves, must be convinced, that if children were but told how the genital parts may be injured, and how they are to be employed in a natural way, they would not have the least curiosity to make any [83] experiments, which might tend to frustrate the benevolent intention of nature.

But however great and original this thought may be, yet it would certainly be very much improved by committing the instruction of youth in this particular to dogs; for these sagacious animals, all of whom appear to be Cynic philosophers, would not only be very well calculated to explain the noble use for which the parts were designed, but would be very willing, at any time, and in any place, to give them specimens of the operation of the parts in a natural way. Not to mention, that they would likewise teach them how to get above those foolish habits, decency and shame, which false opinion first [84] introduced, and ridiculous custom afterwards has so deeply confirmed.

¹ [Wollstonecraft translated from the German *Elements of Morality, for the Use of Children*, by Christian Gotthilf Salzmann (1744–1811), founder of the Schnepfenthal institution, a school inspired by the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. — ED. PHIL.]

But we must not yet dismiss the elephant; since it appears that these wonderful animals are no less calculated to act the part of surgeons, than to please the fair. Says Plutarch:

For being brought to persons that are wounded, they will extract the heads of spears and arrows from their bodies, with a very small degree of pain, and without dilacerating and mangling the flesh.

Now the advantages which would result to apothecaries and physicians, from entering into partnership with these animals, are so important, that they will doubtless be greedily embraced by all the medical [85] tribe. For in the first place, with respect to apothecaries, it is well known, that they are obliged to act in the double capacity of physicians and surgeons, which causes their employment to be very laborious, especially to those of the lowest class, who belong to the order of the foot. For these gentlemen are divided into three tribes, the first and highest consisting of those who sublimely ride to their patients in chariots, without footmen; the second, of those who ride to the sick on horseback; and the third tribe, which is by far the most numerous, being composed of those who visit their patients on foot; and who in wet weather arm themselves with a great coat an umbrella; and in fine, with a fashionable cane. Now these gentleman, by speaking to the elephant, and [86] persuading these noble animals to become their partners, would derive the following amazing advantages from such an association; for they might ride on the backs of their elephants, and might commit the whole surgical department to the entire management of these bulky beasts; not to mention, that as the weight of one man must be very inconsiderable to an elephant, they might with ease carry all sorts of remedies upon the backs of their associates, and thus save a prodigious deal of time, trouble and expense by administering medicines on the spot.

And in the second place, as to physicians, riding on the elephant would save them the expense of a carriage; and this beast being so remarkable strong, they [87] might easily have a large chest fastened to his back, for the purpose of depositing their fees, which at present, in consequence of being secured in their waist-coast pockets, they find very troublesome, from their quantity and weight.

But the elephant is not the only beast with which the medical tribe might associate, to great advantage; for many other animals are as capable of forming great physicians, as elephants are of becoming incomparable surgeons. Says Plutarch:

For we may observe in other animals, a three-fold innate practice of medicine. Thus, for instance, tortoises make use of *basil*, and weasels eat *rice*, when they have devoured a serpent; and dogs purge themselves from abounding bile, with a particular [88] kind of grass; the dragon sharpens the dimness of his sight with *fennel* and the bear, when she leaves her cave, after long emaciation, fees upon the herb called *wild dragons*; because the acrimony of this herb opens and separate her intestines, when they are clung together. At other times, when satiated with food, she repairs to the emmet-hills, and thrusting out her tongue, all soft and unctuous, through the seek kind of slime with which it is enveloped, till it is crowded with emmets, when at length swallows them, and thus recovers her health: and it is reported, that the Egyptians observe and im-

itate the bird called Ibis, in purging and cleansing her bowels with the briny water of the sea. Hence the priests, when they purify themselves, make use of [89] the water of which the Ibis has drank; for these birds will not drink the water, if it be medicinal, or otherwise infected. There are likewise some beasts that cure themselves by abstinence, as wolves and lions, who, when they are over-gorged with animal food, lie still, and digest their crudities by the warmth on one another's bodies.

Now as there is no reason whatever to doubt the truth of these relations, such specimens of medical still must convince the most incredulous, that when these animals are tamed through their association with mankind, we may expect to see physicians equal to the most illustrious among men, in the persons of bears, dragons and weasels; and till all distinctions [90] among mankind are levelled, (an event which is to be hoped will shortly happen) I do not see why an elephant may not become the king's principal surgeon, and a bear his physician in ordinary, as soon as the language of beasts is universally known, or at least understood, by the principal person at court.



Chapter 7.

That magpies are naturally musicians; oxen, arithmeticians; and dogs, actors.

BUT LET US NOW SEE WHAT ADVANTAGES WE MIGHT DERIVE from an amicable association with other animals, such as magpies, oxen, and dogs. And to begin with the magpie, the following story, from the above-mentioned treatise of Plutarch, indisputably proves that this bird naturally possesses musical abilities in the most extraordinary degree.

A certain barber in Rome, who had a shop directly opposite to the Temple, which is called the Greek's Market, bred in his house a miraculous kind of a magpie, who was perpetually chattering with the greatest variety imaginable; sometimes imitating humane speech; sometimes talking in those wild notes peculiar to her nature; and sometimes humming the sounds of wind instruments. Nor was all this the result of any constraint, but the consequence of that extraordinary ambition, by which she accustomed herself to leave nothing unspoken, and nothing that her imitation should not master.

It happened that a certain person of the wealthier sort, and lately dead in the neighbourhood, was carried out to be buried, with a great number of trumpets [93] before him. Now because it was the custom of the bearers to rest themselves before the barber's shop; the trumpeters, who were excellent in their art, and were commanded so to do, stopped a long time at this place, playing on their instruments all the while.

But after that day, the magpie was entirely mute, not so much as uttering the usual notes, by which she called for what she wanted; so that passengers who before admired the loquacity of the bird, were now much more surprised at her sudden silence; and many suspected her to have been poisoned by persons affecting peculiar skill in teaching those kind of birds; but the greatest number were of opinion, that the noise of the trumpets had stupefied [94] her hearing, and that in consequence of this she was likewise deprived of the use of her voice.

But indeed the cause of her unusual silence was not the result of either of these effects; but arose from her retiring to exercise by herself, the imitation of what she had heard, and to sit and prepare her voice, to express in the same manner as the instruments what she had learnt; for soon after she suddenly made her appearance, but had quitted all her former imitations, sounding nothing but the music out of the trumpets, and observing all the changes and cadences of the harmony, with an inconceivable exactness of time. [95]

Now from this curious history, it evidently follows, that magpies, when properly disciplined, (their language being perfectly known to us), might in time form a musical band equal to that at Vauxhall; and thus being employed instead of men, by the proprietors of that elegant place, might save them a prodigious expense; since it does not appear from any accounts, ancient or modern, that either birds or beasts are money-getting animals.

Besides, they would form admirable clerks for dissenting meeting-houses; for as the dissenters have a great objection to instrumental music in divine service, not because of the harmony, but because it is instrumental, the magpie by his imitative [96] art would present them with all the variety of instrumental melody, and yet it would be strictly vocal.

The loquacity indeed of these birds appears to be so admirable, that I see no reason why they might not become excellent Methodist parsons; for they could doubtless as well imitate vehement declamation, and vociferate barbaric cant, as counterfeit the sound of the trumpet, and utter the apparently wild notes of nature.

And thus much for the magpie; — let us now proceed to the ox, who has been unjustly characterized with the epithet of *dull*; as the following history will abundantly evince. [97]

At Susa (says Plutarch) there are oxen that water the King's gardens with portable buckets, of which the number is fixed; for every ox carries a hundred buckets every day; and more than this, you cannot by any means force them to carry. For indeed, when constraint has been used for experiment's sake, nothing could make them stir after they had carried their full number; such an accurate account do they take, and preserve in their memory, as Ctesias, the Gnidian, relates.

Now who can doubt after reading this, but that if the same pains were taken with oxen, as we take with our youth, they would become excellent arithmeticians; and by being taught to write [98] with their hoofs (which is surely no more impracticable than for a man to write with his toes, and which we all know is possible) might form admirable bankers and merchants clerks, or indeed bankers and merchants themselves; and from their indifference to gold, in common with all animals but man, by depositing their gains in the Treasury, might help to pay off the national debt.

Nor are dogs less calculated by nature to become great actors, than oxen to form good arithmeticians, as the following story will, no doubt, fully convince the managers of both the theatres. Says Plutarch:

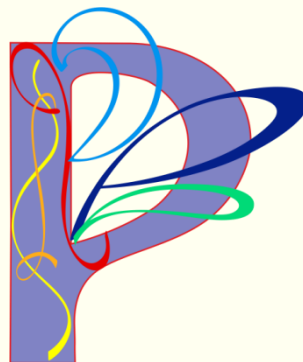
There was a dog at Rome belonging to a certain mimic, [99] who at that time had the management of a farce, consisting of a great variety of parts; in the performance of which he undertook to instruct the actors, by teaching them the several imitations proper for the transactions and passions represented in the farce. Among the rest there was one who was to drink a sleepy potion, and after he had drunk it, was to fall into a deadly drowsiness, and counterfeit the actions of a dying person. The dog, who had studied several of the other gestures and postures, observing this with greater attention, took a piece of bread that was sopped in the potion, and in a short time after he had eat it, counterfeited a trembling, then a staggering, and afterwards a drowsiness, in his head. Then stretching himself out, he lay as if [100] he had been dead; and seemed to offer himself to be dragged out of the place, and carried to burial, as the plot of the play required. But afterwards understanding the proper time, from what was said and acted in the first place he began gently to stir, as if waking out of a profound sleep, and lifting up his head, gazed on all around him: and then to

the amazement of the beholders, he rose up and went to the master to whom he belonged, with all the signs of joy and fawning kindness; so that all the spectators, and even Cæsar himself (for old Vespasian was present in Marcus's Theatre) were highly pleased with the sight. [101]

It appears to me, I confess from this relation that the dog must have acted in a manner equal to Garrick himself; and it is to be hoped, that the managers of our theatres, in consequence of paying proper attention to this wonderful story, will, in a short time, bring on the stage dogs and puppies, to act at least jointly with men, till the language of these animals is known in common; and when that much to be desired event shall take place, that they will suffer them to act by themselves, to the infinite delight of numberless spectators; for surely when puppies act, the theatres will be uncommonly full.

I might here enlarge greatly on the prodigious benefits which would arise to [102] mankind from associating with fishes, through the means of a submarine navigation, which Bishop Wilkins has demonstrated to be practicable, in his ingenious treatise on *Mathematical Magic*; but this would too much exceed the limits of the present work. However, if the reader is desirous of obtaining perfect conviction in this particular, he need only consult the latter part of the so often mentioned curious treatise of Plutarch, and he will find that fishes are no less sagacious than land animals; and that of course the advantages arising from restoring them to their natural equality with mankind, are not less numerous and great, than those we have already taken notice of, in the terrestrial and aerial tribes. [103]

And thus much may suffice, for an historical proof, that brutes are equal to men. It only now remains (and this must be the province of some able hand) to demonstrate the same great truth in a similar manner, of vegetable, minerals, and even the most apparently contemptible clod of earth; that thus this sublime theory being copiously and accurately discussed, and its truth established by an indisputable series of facts, government may be entirely subverted, subordination abolished, and all things everywhere, and in every respect, be common to all.



Suggested reading for students.



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- THE RUSSIAN MOTE AND THE BRITISH BEAM
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- WESTERN RELIGION ALONE IS TO BLAME FOR THE CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
- WHAT IS MUSIC BY RICE
- WHEN THE DOORS OF THE WORLD CLOSED ON THEM
- WHY DO ANIMALS SUFFER
- WHY THE HOLLOW MEN PRIZE THEIR VICE

