The Animal/Human Interface: A Journey Toward Understanding Our Views of Nature and Our Use of Animals

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both sides of this debate, but there are many inconsistencies and variations both within and between these positions. If we seek to understand man's rightful position in the natural world, we must understand both the separateness and the union of his intellect and instinctual selves. The first commandment in this process, however, is to accept that both these manifestations are products of humanity's shared origins with the natural world.

Human Physical and Cultural Evolution

Both the human body and the human mind are products of a lengthy and relentless association with other animals. We are a slow-to-become creature, a 60 million-year-old ark of biological transition, emanating from a terrestrial squirrel-like form which eventually sought the great sea of life that swayed in the wind and light above. In the trees, vision, speed, agility and intelligence all were honed, accompanied eventually by an increase in expressiveness and excitability, a weakness for novelty, and a great refinement of the eye to judge color and detail. The early monkeys had indeed ascended to heights and coped marvelously in the three-dimensional space that brought food and danger in an exquisite array of forms and behaviors. From this gauntlet of experience they carried the survival characteristics that were to prove crucial to the great transition ... the return to the ground and an exploration of the open terrain from where the vista of humanity was beheld.

Our predecessors gleaned a living along the savanna skirts, at first hesitantly exploring the open land and then gradually moving with greater confidence and eventual sophistication deeper onto these tropical grass expanses. Upright in stance only, these before-men experimented with all manner of foods, and although plant parts composed much of their diet, they laid waste any fragile creature that could be subdued. Like other modest predators, they were the thieves of nests, the munchers of frogs and the slurpers of grubs. They were not above tearing at the fly-infested carcasses of those animals which died under the claws of greater predators, or which fell before drought and flood. Eventually they became emboldened enough to drive wild dogs and other lesser carnivores from their kills. In so doing, they learned the great effect their clannish behavior had on things much stronger and fiercer than themselves. Here, too, the shadow of humankind was cast, and they would linger in its quiet darkness. It would now take but a few million years for our species to emerge ... the talking, dancing ape.

When our ancestors moved onto the open landscapes, they joined in the great drama of predators and prey that so exquisitely defines the essence of all

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Introduction

The world of the 21st century will be vastly poorer in terms of natural diversity than the world we inherited. In truth, there is nothing we can do to change this reality, but we can modify the scale and severity of this reduction. To do so we must fashion and accept a collective world view that safeguards the natural systems upon which all life depends, and we must redefine humanity's relationship with the earth and all living things. Worldwide, the imperatives for these goals are painfully obvious, and the economic and social destabilizations associated with resource depletions and biodiversity dilution will reverberate through the global community. The ecological catastrophes that loom will be entirely democratic in their effects. Nature will not concern herself with race or position.

Here in North America, we enjoy an incredible abundance of wildlife, the remarkable achievement of a unique and profoundly successful conservation strategy. This natural phenomenon emerged sphinx-like from the wreckage and devastation of our wildlife species and populations, conducted with perverse efficacy on a continental scale, with the compliance of both industry and government. From this historical perspective and bolstered by the reality of this wild resurrection, we are uniquely positioned to give guidance to the world on how to safeguard animal species and populations. After all, one hundred years ago we designed and implemented a sustainable program that not only preserved populations but allowed them to resurge. This North American Conservation Strategy was formulated by a diversity of philosophical views, it is important to remember, but it was and is characterized principally by a policy of wise consumptive use of living creatures.

Today, these same philosophies are again fomenting in a storm of conflicts and antagonism, as each strives for protection of the animal world and, simultaneously, the establishment of a code of ethics toward nature that is believed to be the best. The most clearly demarcated difference between these positions runs along the ridge line of consumptive use. Passions are deep on

in an instant, the herd was born! The silent blades of grass inexplicably growing richer the more they were grazed and transformed miraculously into the bellowing throng, and this in turn recreating itself in the jackals that smiled as they approached the moveable feast. In this way, too, the world of myth and metaphor was conceived. Now things could represent others and yet be themselves all at the same time! The human mind was unchained and set to explode the horizons of perception. Thus, there appeared in all animals aspects of the human and in all humans traces of the animal lingered. And in all things the land itself resonated—the great womb, the mother earth. These incarnations were not alternatives, but dualities unending. Like the father, son and holy ghost, they were *all one* and *a lone* simultaneously. The upright bear was a brother man. In later times, it would become fashionable to speak figuratively; in the beginning, however, the word was indeed made flesh.

As man's inclusiveness in the predator/prey relationship expanded, his models of societal arrangement also appeared to mirror the animal world. The physical and psychological gender differences were harnessed to maximize efficiency and success, evolving to the model we now call the hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Here, too, human existence paralleled the strategies of many other animal species, both predators and prey, and the awareness of animals was itself prismed through the window of reproductive biology, the males moving out to hunt, the females attending to the preparations of the kill and the procurement of foods closer at hand and easily acquired. Each sex, however, developed an acute awareness of animal signs and behavior, and undoubtedly, women were the initial imparters of much of this knowledge to the children they were often left alone with to protect and care for. In this sense (as in many others), females centered the universe of evolving mankind, for while their gathering was not dependant on the male, the opportunity for males to wander freely to procure living animals via the hunt was indeed possible only because the females could be relied upon to safeguard their offspring at home. It cannot be surprising, therefore, that in humans subtle differences exist between the sexes in their attitudes toward nature.

The continuance of mankind was marked until very recently by a progressive improvement in his predatory/hunting abilities. Certainly the transition from leaf eater to omnivore and then highly capable predator did not proceed at a constant pace. Rather, the refinement of our species as predators reflected a logistic pattern of improvement, starting slowly and then escalating rapidly in the last few hundred thousand years. The great significance of this murderous fluorescence cannot, however, be underestimated. It was associated with and enabled humans to attain the greatest geographic range of any animal species and occupy the most variable of environments. It produced the most

toward nature and his place within it are but a microcosm of the endless cycling that defines the sustenance of all organic reality.

It is with considerable confidence, therefore, that we can predict continuing debate regarding whether the taking of animal lives is ever appropriate and whether there is a significant enough distinction between man and other animals to deny them the possession of soul. Leibniz (the German Plato) one time remarked, in defense of the notions of continuity and fullness in creation (i.e., the Great Chain of Being), that "nature makes no leaps." It may be said, contrarily, that nature and all that falls within it, including man's harried questioning of his role thereto, consists of nothing less than an endless series of leaps. The debate now swirling around our attitudes toward animals is but one engaging case in point. Most significantly, these components of man's inherent questioning of himself are not *emergent* in the late 20th century but rather are *persistent* expressions of his historical development. In this sense, they are indeed completely natural. For the first time, however, our resolution of these questions is an imperative for the very continuity of life. A great leap for mankind, indeed.

natural life. Indeed, above all other characterizations, beyond all other impressions, it is the stark fluency of the chase to death that epitomizes the functionality of adaptation and the ephemeralness of life. Does not the dust-shrouded chase of the impala, where seemingly the earth itself is called to action by the charging lion, instill in us an awe that is rarely so acute, even in the midst of the greatest placid beauty? Are we not stirred and captivated by this? Little wonder. Man played seriously in this game and intrinsically understands both the heady exhilaration of the predator and the stark terror of the prey.

As he wandered ever greater expanses of country, man incorporated into his memory and growing intelligence a vast array of animal lore. Undoubtedly, this included a finely detailed compendium of animal signs and vocalizations, the latter mimicked and used to decoy animals to their deaths, the former read like a richly textured script. The sounds of animals may also have been repeated as a phonetic language, serving to reference specific animal types before the advent of descriptive terms. Indeed, I suggest this animal mimicry may have been the primordial tongue of man and served as the substrate for the selection of language capacity. How ironic this would make man's ongoing destruction of the natural world, a tyranny perpetrated against his foremost mentors!

But the human animal also came to understand the relatedness and dependance between the plant and animal domains. A consummate omnivore, he witnessed the mysteries of seasonal change and abundance and learned that from soils spring life which recreates itself and nourishes all living things. As a creature of opportunity, he could place himself in the stream of life and decide when to hunt and when to forage. In this context, the hunt was not symbolic but rather a way to existence, a necessary and rewarding engagement that intimately involved brother species. It was often quixotic and capricious, however, seeming indeed to involve some voluntary association of the prey with just the right wind or terrain. Did not the animal itself decide to be where it was, thus suggesting a self-sacrifice, mirrored in the placid resignation of the captured to its captor? Does not the wildebeest seem resigned to being eaten alive once brought to the ground by hyenas? These, then, were some of the dimensions of the hunting/animal experience, its non-determinism and its sensitivity to the guidance of greater universal forces, that permeated the physical and intellectual marrow of man and cast a faint light along his footpath to mythology.

Thus, man's animal models, which were in fact his first and, I would argue, enduring, models of the world, were infused with the subtle notions of transcendence and deliverance. He could see that all realities were layered and, most wondrous of all, that there were realities which could not be seen but existed nevertheless. And so the great plains wavered in shimmering heat, and

meaning that most recent views believe themselves a new creation and somehow progressive beyond earlier mumblings. Indeed, each culture, and to a lesser extent each generation, attempts to transfix its world view and see it as a new conception of man and nature. Thus is the "emergence" of anti-use and animal rights philosophies today often viewed. It is, however, possible to see these notions running through time, parallel with other more utilitarian and even domineering views of man's role within and without nature. Often, indeed, these seemingly antagonistic positions are spawned within the same current of ideas and seem to differentiate only as they catch light and shade moving across small riffles of perspective or lie in those restive pools that seem inevitably to materialize along any stream of time. Despite this generic tendency toward modification within form, however, we can recognize great intellectual seductions that stand like mountains against an otherwise subdued plane of reference. One of these certainly is the ancient and ethereal notion of the Great Chain of Being.

Although we accept that ideas have more ancient beginnings than we can adequately trace, it is necessary, for practical reasons, to begin the discussion of this idea and its relevance to our views of animals with Plato. From the tower of this intellect, we view the many images which are immersed in the complex medium of our man/nature dualism, including the notions of 1) God (the Idea of Good) as a creator of a world so full that every expression of life is contained there and that each is a sacred component of the inexhaustible perfection of his creative capacity; and 2) that man should strive to portage himself beyond this world to attain perfection and a full expression of himself. Thus, the primordia of man as part of the whole of nature but also embodying an inherent desirousness to transcend it are here developed. To this construct, Plato's student, Aristotle, added the subtly antithetical notion of continuity and, thus, introduced an at once elemental logic that would influence all subsequent science (it is, after all, possible to systematically describe the relationships in nature!) and a system of classification for the natural world (a *scala naturae*) that must eventually confront the notion of man's position within it. In addition to this idea of a gradual ascending order or hierarchy, Aristotle added a qualitative notion which identified to each level some scale of distance (gradation) from the perfection of God. Thus, in combination with Plato's notion of a universe displaying the perfection of creation were added the notions that man was invested with greater potential to realize a closeness to God and a "natural" position of primariness at the end of a Great Chain of Being. He was, however, hopelessly separated from the creator, and thus, he was condemned to struggle without hope to establish a relationship with nature that would equate with both his potential and justified personal edification as the best of imperfect beings.

Thus was born an intellectual framework that through the present day explains and infiltrates most musings, poetic or scientific, on the design, functioning and rationale for natural existence. From its constitution can be anticipated our notions of man's responsibility toward the natural world, our concerns for biodiversity dilution (for even the loss of one link would represent an irreplaceable loss to the perfection of the whole) and a rationale for our use of animals as an ordered manifestation of man's hierarchical eminence. From this same source, however, and principally through the theorems of gradation and continuity, we inherit the idea of inseparable distinctions between life forms. How, then, can man not view some creatures, and presumably, foremost those *closest* to him, as possessed of rights to existence and a soul? If the line is but a shadow of infinite thinness, how can it be erased? If Homer's chain hangs from heaven to earth, then who would dare break it? On the other hand, if the variety of nature, and the laws which prevail such as the perpetuation of life through death are also expressions of the perfection of creation, then the existence of man as a killer and consumer of animals must, not only by necessity but also by divine ordination of the perfect, be a profound and appropriate expression of his rightful place. And so it goes.

The portability of these ideas is one of the remarkable elasticities of intellectual history and, from what I can judge, seems to have reached its greatest fluency in the 18th century. This is not to suggest that notions of our place in nature and our rightful attitude toward other creation were not of interest or significance in the intervening ages. There is no doubt that the great musings of Augustine, Aquinas, Copernicus, Descartes and especially Leibniz attended to this and, thus, placed it at the heart of religious and cosmological reformations throughout the development of Western thought; nevertheless, it seems that in the 18th century the notion of fulness, continuity and gradation of perfection in nature entered the domain of dogma (although a dogma with alternative faces). This is striking, given the emphasis that this century placed on the Baconian approach of patient and empirical observation as the way to an understanding of reality; but it was indeed the case that the Chain of Being, a derivative of Greek metaphysics, was made fit with direct observations of the natural world. Indeed, the discoveries of the microscopists seemed to verify its very nature! The inertia of intellect thus proved with this phenomenon to be no less formidable than the inertia of evolutionary inheritance referred to earlier.

One of the most significant and misunderstood developments of 18th century philosophizing, then, was the formation of challenges to man's perception of his uniqueness and exalted position in the cosmos. These challenges, surprisingly, emerged from the very notion of the Chain of Being that was at this and other times investing society with quite contradictory positions. This

development and the duality of interpretation it reflected stand in stark contrast to popular ideas that suggest through time man has carried a one-sided view of his ordination in nature. It is especially interesting that this emerged so forcibly in the 18th century, a time in which nature was a predominant social and scientific pursuit.

Regardless of this quirkiness, there is little doubt that, by the 18th century, the idea that animals exist for the sake of man was under serious dispute as enunciations from the Chain of Being recalled that all levels in the hierarchy exist for the perfection of the totality and not for any other level. A further argument was that the levels of distinction were infinitesimally small and, thus, essentially without borders. This position was, of course, not entirely inclusive, as many religious arguments were still professing and, in some cases, only then culminating in the anthropocentric view; nevertheless, the alternative was a clear and accepted perspective. The pattern of this dialectic, where simultaneously both the argument and its refutation emerge to prominence, is a highly predictable outcome of the process of idea maturation. Such things are never static, however, and toward the end of the 18th century, the tables were to turn sharply toward acceptance of a special status for man, a theme roughly challenged by the Darwin-Wallace synergism before another century had passed!

Conclusion

This brief exploration of man's physical and intellectual development is intended to challenge the misconception that man has consistently viewed himself as the center of the natural world and, therefore, has not until the present day of enlightenment questioned his role in nature. It is also meant to furnish some sense of the depth to which we must go if we are to understand and articulate the profound nature of man's use of living resources. The argument presented here is that both the physical and mental components of mankind arose from the deep involvement of his physiology and psyche with other living things, the interrelationships between which furnished not only the sustenance for his physical evolution, but also very early shaped the pathways of his intellectual development. Furthermore, at least one of these great corridors of thought did not emerge as a defense of man's right to rule but rather as an intellectual prayer to the creative force of the cosmos and, as such, was more an exercise in humility and reverence. That such a province of intellectualism would contain sufficient variety to accommodate entirely antithetical positions is consistent not only with man's recognized duality but, indeed, with the endless variety of creation which the Great Chain of Being was set to describe. In this sense, the dichotomy of man's instinctual/intellectual nature and his revolving attitudes

luxuriant humans, in terms of brain and body size, we know of. It was ultimately linked with the discovery of new continents and represented the culmination of human evolution in nature. And it saw the emergence of religion, art, sophisticated technologies and the use of fire. In short, the zenith of man's hunting prowess was linked with all the great mysteries of his mind and the salient characteristics of his capacity to dominate nature. Thereafter, since agriculture's beginnings 10,000 years ago, man has developed largely beyond nature, void of any anchor with the cosmos of natural rhythms. Indeed, I would suggest that because this development has been at odds with man in nature, then it has also been at odds with the nature of man. Still, he cannot divorce himself from the ancient source of his being, for long before he was an industrialist, man was a dominant predator, a grubber of the soil and prey to a host of wild things. No other species can trace such a remarkable transition; perhaps it is inescapable that he alone should ponder his rightful place.

But did man struggle with this tension in ancient times, or are his present day anxieties over nature artefacts of modernity? I suggest that to some extent he did and that his attempts to represent himself in cave art amidst the creatures he hunted, under what appear to have been ceremonial circumstances, imply an awareness of his special case. By this time, he could meditate on the significance of his own life and his role in the death of others ... and his dependance upon them. Conceived in those torch-lit tombs, where pigment and rock formation are brilliantly conjoined, are the womb stirrings of a something sacred, and from this seeding our sense of morality toward nature was born.

For all these reasons, we must look to his farthest past to understand the formative essentials of man's nature perspective and recognize that these are inextricably bound with a layered reality that confronts almost every dimension of his humanness. Once we accept this position, we can seek the commonality of nature world views which may appear at first to be diametrically opposed. But first we must deal with another transcendence: the spear launched shining through the Paleolithic dawn and transformed to a pen in Plato's hand.

The Inertia of Intellect

It is not possible, of course, to review here the great procession of ideas that were at once linked and either antagonistic or supportive to man's conception of himself as an integral part of nature; it is crucial, however, to acknowledge both the reality of long-term persistence and metamorphic change in these attitudes. Our view of what the patterns of these ideas have been is likely, as with other intellectual constructs, imbued with its own phylogenetic inertia,