

The Concept of Beastliness: Philosophy, Ethics and Animal Behaviour

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Every age has its pet contradictions. Thirty years ago, we used to accept Marx and Freud together, and then wonder, like the chameleon on the tartan, why life was so confusing. Today there is similar trouble over the question whether there is, or is not, something called Human Nature. On the one hand, there has been an explosion of animal behaviour studies, and comparisons between animals and men have become immensely popular. People use evidence from animals to decide whether man is naturally aggressive, or naturally territorial; even whether he has an Aggressive or Territorial Instinct. On the other hand, many sociologists and psychologists still seem to hold the Behaviourist view that man is a creature entirely without instincts, and so do existentialist philosophers. If so, all comparison with animals must be irrelevant. (To save space, I have had to simplify both these party lines here, but if anyone thinks I am oversimplifying the behaviourist one, I can only ask him to keep on reading *New Society*). On that view, man is entirely the product of his culture. He starts off infinitely plastic, and is formed completely by the society in which he grows up. There is no end to the possible variations between cultures; what we take to be man's instincts are just the deep-dug prejudices of our own society. If we form families, fear the dark, or jump at the sight of a spider, these are just results of our conditioning. For Existentialism, at first sight the scene is very different, because the existentialist asserts man's freedom and will not let him call himself the product of anything. But Existentialism too denies that man has a nature; if he had his freedom would not be complete. So Sartre insists that 'there is no human nature. . . . Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world, and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes himself.'¹

For Existentialism there is only the Human Condition, which is what happens to man and not what he is born like. If we are afraid of the dark, it is because we choose to be cowards; if we care more for our own children than other people's it is because we choose to be partial. We must never talk about human nature or human instincts.

¹ *Existentialism and Humanism*, 28.

In this paper I want, first, simply to draw attention to this dialectic, which can certainly do with intelligent attention from all sides. Second, I want, myself, to work from the animal behaviour angle, which I think is extremely interesting and has not yet been fully used by philosophers. One reason for this is undoubtedly the fear of fatalism; another is the appalling misuse of terms like 'instinct' and 'human nature' in the past; the third is the dottiness of some ethological propaganda. To dispose of the last first; if we vetoed every science that has had some lunatic exponents we could quickly empty the libraries. What is needed in such cases is to sort the wheat from the chaff. To quote Konrad Lorenz;²

... if I have to confess to a sneaking liking for, and even a feeling of gratitude to, my adversaries, I think it only fair to confess that some of my allies make me squirm. Desmond Morris, who is an excellent ethologist and knows better, makes me wince by over-emphasizing, in his book *The Naked Ape*, the beastliness of man. I admit that he does so with the commendable intention of shocking haughty people who refuse to see that man has anything in common with animals at all, but in this attempt he minimizes the unique properties and faculties of man in an effectively misleading manner; the outstanding and biologically relevant property of the human species is neither its partial hairlessness nor its 'sexiness', but its faculty for conceptual thought—a fact of which Desmond Morris is, of course, perfectly aware. Another writer who makes me suffer with almost equal intensity, if for different reasons, is Robert Ardrey...

To that mass of knowledge, Lorenz himself adds a clear view of the conceptual scene typical, it must be said, of scientists who have had the foresight to get themselves educated on the continent and not in England or America. (This is also true of Tinbergen and Eibl-Eibesfeldt and of that splendid old person Wolfgang Köhler.³) Because of this, and for simplicity, I shall address myself largely to his arguments, and particularly to his book *On Aggression*, without suggesting that he is either isolated or infallible. Like him, however, I have a difficulty of method. The point of my argument is to show how and in what cases comparison between man and other species makes sense, but I must sometimes use such comparisons in the process. Those to whom it is a matter of faith and morals not to consider them, have a problem. I think the circle will prove virtuous, but in advance I suggest the following test. Comparisons make sense only when they are put in the context of the entire character of the species concerned *and of the known principles governing resemblances between species*. Thus: it is invalid to compare suicide in lemmings or infanticide in hamsters *on their own* with human suicide or infanticide. But when you have

² *On Aggression*, 3.

³ See *The Mentality of Apes*, esp. chs vii and viii.

looked at the relation of the act to other relevant habits and needs, when you have considered the whole nature of the species, comparison may be possible and helpful.

Now for the other objections.

(1) About the fear of fatalism I shall not say much, because it seems to me quite misplaced here. The genetic causes of human behaviour need not be seen as overwhelming any more than the social causes; either lot is alarming if you treat it as predestined to win, but no one is committed to doing that by admitting that both lots exist. Knowing that I have a naturally bad temper does not make me lose it; on the contrary it should help me to keep it, by forcing me to distinguish my peevishness from moral indignation. My freedom, therefore, does not seem to be particularly threatened by the admission, nor by any light cast on the meaning of my bad temper by comparison with animals.

(2) Words like 'instinct' are another matter. Ethologists, particularly Lorenz and Tinbergen, have put in a lot of work on these terms, and I think they are now fit for use again. They are used, not wildly but in a definite and well-organized way, in the detailed, systematic, gruelling studies of animal behaviour which have been made by trained zoologists in this century, and have been given the name of Ethology. I shall discuss the use of the terms later.

The general point is that animals clearly lead a much more structured, less chaotic life than people have been accustomed to think, and are therefore, in certain quite definite ways, much less different from men. (There is still plenty of difference, but it is a different difference.) Traditionally, people have congratulated themselves on being an island of order in a sea of chaos. Lorenz and company have shown that this is all my eye and Bishop Wilberforce. There follow various changes in our view of man, because that view has been built up on a supposed contrast between man and animals which was formed by seeing animals, not as they were, but as projections of our own fears and desires. We have thought of a wolf always as he appears to the shepherd at the moment of seizing a lamb from the fold. But this is like judging the shepherd by the impression he makes on the lamb, at the moment when he finally decides to turn it into mutton. Lately, ethologists have taken the trouble to watch wolves systematically, between meal-times, and have found them to be, by human standards, paragons of regularity and virtue. They pair for life, they are faithful and affectionate spouses and parents, they show great loyalty to their pack, great courage and persistence in the face of difficulties, they carefully respect each other's territories, keep their dens clean, and extremely seldom kill anything that they do not need for dinner. If they fight with another wolf, the fight ends with his submission; there is normally a complete inhibition on killing the suppliant and on attacking females and cubs. They have also, like all social animals, a fairly elaborate etiquette, including

subtly varied ceremonies of greeting and reassurance, by which friendship is strengthened, co-operation achieved and the wheels of social life generally oiled. All this is not the romantic impressions of casual travellers; it rests on long and careful investigations by trained zoologists, backed up by miles of film, graphs, maps, population surveys, droppings analysis and all the rest of the contemporary toolbag. Moreover, these surveys have often been undertaken by authorities which were initially rather hostile to the wolf, and inclined to hope that it could be blamed for their various troubles. Farley Mowat, doing this work in the Canadian Arctic, had his results rejected time and again because they showed that the sudden drop in the numbers of deer was *not* due to wolves, who had not changed their technique in a number of centuries, but to hunters, who had.⁴

Actual wolves, then, are not much like the folk-figure of the wolf, and the same goes for apes and other creatures. But *it is the folk-figure that has been popular with philosophers*. They have usually taken over the popular notion of lawless cruelty which underlies such terms as 'brutal', 'bestial', 'bestly', 'animal desires', etc., and have used it, uncriticized, as a contrast to illuminate the nature of man. Man has been mapped by reference to a landmark which is largely mythical. Because this habit is so ancient, and so deep-rooted, I shall say a little more about it before turning to the philosophic arguments in question. Consideration of its oddity may perhaps prevent us dismissing the whole topic in advance. The fact that some people are silly about animals cannot stop the topic being a serious one. Animals are not just one of the things with which people amuse themselves, like chewing-gum and water-skis, *they are the group to which people belong*. We are not just rather like animals; we *are* animals. Our difference from our relatives may be striking, but the comparison has always been, and must be, crucial to our view of ourselves. It will matter if, as I believe, the gap comes in a slightly different place from where tradition puts it, as well as being rather narrower. The traditional view has certainly distorted argument in ethics, and may have caused mistakes about the possibilities open to humanity.

Turning back then to wolves: the contrast of the ethologist's fully documented picture with the traditional view of the wolf needs no comment. I have read a chatty journalistic book on wolves, whose author described in detail how wolves trapped in medieval France used to be flayed alive, with various appalling refinements. 'Perhaps this was rather cruel,' he remarked, 'but then the wolf is itself a cruel beast.' The words sound so natural; it is quite difficult to ask oneself; do wolves in fact flay people alive? Or to take in the fact that the only animal that shows the slightest interest in doing this sort of thing is *homo sapiens*. Another complaint that the author made against wolves was their Treachery. They would

⁴ Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf*; Murie, *The Wolves of Mount McKinley*.

creep up on people secretly, and then they would attack so suddenly that their victims did not have time to defend themselves. The idea that wolves would starve if they always gave fair warning never strikes him. Wolves, in fact, have traditionally been *blamed* for being carnivores, which is doubly surprising since the people who blamed them normally ate meat themselves, and were not, as the wolf is, compelled by their stomachs to do so.

The restraint apparent in wolves seems to be found in most other carnivores, and well-armed vegetarian creatures too. Where murder is so easy, a species *must* have a rigorous inhibition against it or perish. (*Of course* this inhibition is not a morality, but it works in many ways like one.) Animals less strongly armed do not need this defence. Lorenz⁵ gives chilling examples from Roe-deer and Doves, in both of which species stronger members will slowly murder any weaker one if they are kept in captivity with it, because these creatures in a free state save themselves by running away, and not by relying on the inhibition of the victor. And it is painfully clear that Man is nearer to this group than to the wolf.

Man, before his tool-using days, was pretty poorly armed. Without beak or horns, he must have found murder a tedious and exhausting business, and built-in inhibitions against it were therefore not necessary for survival. Then, by the time he invented weapons, it was too late to alter his nature. He had already become a dangerous beast. War and vengeance are primitive human institutions, not late perversions; most cosmogonies postulate strife in Heaven, and bloodshed is taken for granted as much in the Book of Judges as in the *Iliad* or the Sagas. There may be non-aggressive societies, as anthropologists assure us, but they are white blackbirds and possibly (as I shall argue later) not so white as they are painted. It seems likely that man shows *more* savagery to his own kind than any other mammal, though among the beasts Lorenz mentions, rats are certainly a competitor. They, it seems, will normally try to kill any rat they meet of another tribe, but in compensation they never kill or seriously fight rats of their own tribe. Rats cannot therefore compete with Cain, or Romulus, still less with Abimelech the son of Gideon, who murdered, on one stone, *all* his brothers, to the number of three-score and ten.⁶ An animal who does this is surely rightly labelled 'dangerous'.

Yet he has always believed otherwise. Man, civilized Western man, has always maintained that in a bloodthirsty world he alone was comparatively harmless. Consider the view of the African jungle given by Victorian hunters. The hunter assumed that every creature he met would attack him, and accordingly shot it at sight. Of course he didn't want to eat it, but he could always stuff it (in order to triumph over his human enemies) and anyway he assumed it was noxious; it would be described in his

⁵ *King Solomon's Ring*, 192.

⁶ *Judges*, IX. 5.

memoirs as 'the great brute'. Drawings even exist of Giant Pandas cast in this totally unconvincing role—and shot accordingly. Yet in these days game wardens and photographers habitually treat lions as familiarly as big dogs. It is understood that so long as they are well fed and not provoked they are no more likely to attack you than the average Alsatian. Much the same seems to hold of elephants and other big game. These creatures have their own occupations, and, unless seriously disturbed, are not anxious for a row. Gorillas in particular are peace-loving beasts; Schaller⁷ visited a tribe of them for six months without receiving so much as a cross word, or seeing any quarrelling worth naming. In this case, and no doubt in others, Victorian man was deceived by confusing threatening behaviour with attack. Gorillas do threaten, but the point is precisely to avoid combat. By looking sufficiently dreadful, a gorilla patriarch can drive off intruders and defend his family without the trouble and danger of actually fighting. The same thing seems to hold of other simians, and particularly of Howler Monkeys, whose dreadful wailing used to freeze that white hunter's blood. For howlers have reduced the combat business to its lowest and most satisfactory terms. When two groups of them compete for a territory, they both sit down and howl their loudest, and the side which makes the most noise has won. That nervous White Man, with his heart in his mouth and his finger on his trigger, was among the most dangerous things in the jungle. His weapon was at least as powerful as those of the biggest animals, and while they attacked only what they could eat, or what was really annoying them, he would shoot at anything big enough to aim at. Why did he think they were more savage than he? Why has civilized Western man always thought so?

I am not surprised that early man *disliked* wolves. When an animal tries to eat you, you cannot be expected to like it, and only a very occasional Buddhist will co-operate. But why did he feel so morally superior? Could he not see that the wolf's hunting him was exactly the same as his hunting the deer? (There are tribes which do think in this way: but it is Western thought that I am exploring.) As Lorenz remarks, people are inclined to disapprove of carnivores even when they eat other animals and not people, as though other animals all formed one species, and the carnivores were cannibals. 'The average man,' he says, 'does not judge the fox that kills a hare by the same standard as the hunter who shoots one for exactly the same reason, but with the severe censure that he would apply to a game-keeper who made a practice of shooting farmers and frying them for supper.' This disapproval is very marked on the occasions when foxes do kill for sport or practice, destroying more hens than they can eat. You would not guess, to hear people talk at such times, that people ever hunted foxes. In the same way, it makes a very disreputable impression when

⁷ G. Schaller, *The Year of the Gorilla*.

Jane Goodall⁸ reports that the chimpanzees she watched would occasionally catch and eat a baby baboon or colobus monkey, though they all lived amicably together most of the time and the children even played together. But what else goes on on the traditional farm?

Sing, Dilly dilly duckling, come and be killed,
For you must be stuffed, and my customers filled.

The reason why such parallels are hard to see is, I suggest, that *man has always been unwilling to admit his own ferocity*, and has tried to deflect attention from it by making animals out more ferocious than they are. Sometimes the animals themselves have been blamed and punished. Such customs as the flaying of wolves were probably intended as punishments, though it might be hard to separate this intention from magic. And certainly the Wickedness of animals has often been used to justify our killing or otherwise interfering with them. It is a cock-eyed sort of justification, unless Beasts were supposed capable of Deliberation. We would probably do better to invoke our natural loyalty to our own species than to rely on our abstract superiority to others. But I am more interested for the moment in the philosophic use of the Beast Within than in our treatment of Beasts Without.

The philosopher's Beast Within is a lawless monster to whom nothing is forbidden. It is so described both by moralists like Plato, who are against it, and by ones like Nietzsche, who are for it. Here is a typical passage from Book IX of the *Republic*, where Plato⁹ is talking about our nastier desires. These

... bestir themselves in dreams, when the gentler part of the soul slumbers, and the control of Reason is withdrawn. Then the Wild Beast in us, full-fed with meat and drink, becomes rampant and shakes off sleep to go in quest of what will gratify its own instincts. As you know, it will cast off all shame and prudence at such moments and stick at nothing. In phantasy it will not shrink from intercourse with a mother or anyone else, man, god or brute, or from forbidden food or any deed of blood. It will go to any lengths of shamelessness and folly.

Consider how odd the image is, in spite of its familiarity. Why not say, 'I have these thoughts in my off moments'? Why not at least the Other Man within? What is gained by talking about the Beast?

Here is Nietzsche,¹⁰ speaking of the Lion whom he invokes to break the chain of convention:

To create for himself freedom for new creation—for this the Lion's strength is sufficient,

⁸ Jane van Lawick Goodall, *My Friends the Wild Chimpanzees*.

⁹ *Republic*, IX, 571c.

¹⁰ *Thus Spake Zarathustra*; Discourse Of The Three Metamorphoses.

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To create for himself freedom, and a holy Nay even to duty; therefore,
my brethren, is there need of the Lion.

Once it loved as holiest Thou Shalt—Now it must see illusion and
tyranny even in its holiest, that it may snatch freedom even from
its love—

For this there is need of the Lion. . . .

But in the world there is no such beast. To talk of a Beast is to talk of a thing with its own laws. If lions really did not draw the line at anything—if they went about mating with crocodiles, ignoring territory, eating poisonous snakes and killing their own cubs—they would not *be* lions, nor, as a species, would they last long. This abstract Beast is a fancy on the level of the eighteenth century's abstract Savage, whether Noble or otherwise. (Dr Johnson: 'Fanciful people may talk of a mythology being amongst them, but it must be invention. . . . And what account of their religion can you suppose to be learnt from savages?')¹¹ What anthropology did for this myth, ethology now does for the Beast myth. Kipling's Law of the Jungle is nearer to reality than this fancy of the moralists. What is particularly odd is that beasts are supposed to be so given to sexual licence. It really should not have needed Desmond Morris to point out that, among animal species, *homo sapiens* gives an exceptional amount of time and attention to his sexual life. For most species, a brief mating season and a simple instinctive pattern make of it a seasonal disturbance with a definite routine, comparable to Christmas shopping; it is exactly in human life that it plays, for good or ill, a much more serious and central part. With no other species could a Freudian theory ever have got off the ground. Gorillas, in particular, take so little interest in sex that they really shock Robert Ardrey:¹² he concludes that they are in their decadence. Yet Tolstoy,¹³ speaking of the life of systematic sexual indulgence, called it 'the ideal of monkeys or Parisians'.

If then there is no Lawless Beast outside man, it seems very strange to conclude that there is one inside him. It would be more natural to say, the beast within us gives us partial order; the business of conceptual thought will only be to complete it. But the opposite, *a priori*, reasoning was the one that prevailed. If the Beast Within was capable of every iniquity, people reasoned, then Beasts Without probably were so too. This notion made man anxious to exaggerate his difference from all other species, and to ground all activities he valued in capacities unshared by the animals,

¹¹ Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, Everyman 2, 34.

¹² Robert Ardrey, *African Genesis*, 126–127; Schaller, *The Year of the Gorilla*.

¹³ L. Tolstoy, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, ch. ii. For further comparison of human sexuality with that of other primate species, see Wickler, 'Socio-Sexual Signals', in D. Morris, *Primate Ethology*, 1967. Also, in spite of certain crass and obvious errors, *The Naked Ape*. Eibl-Eibesfeldt in *Love and Hate* sets the whole problem very well in context.

whether the evidence warranted it or no. In a way this evasion does the species credit, because it reflects our horror at the things we do. Man fears his own guilt, and insists on fixing it on something evidently alien and external. Beasts Within solve the Problem of Evil. It does him credit, because it shows the power of his conscience, but all the same it is a dangerous fib. It is my contention that this use of the Beast Within as a scapegoat for human wickedness has led to some bad confusion, not only about Beasts (which might not matter) but about Man. I suspect that Man began to muddle himself quite badly at the point where he said 'The Woman beguiled me, and I did eat', and the Woman said the same about the Serpent.

Let us consider the predicament of primitive man. He is not without natural inhibitions, but his inhibitions are weak. He cannot, like the Dove or the Roe-Deer, cheerfully mince up his family in cold blood and without provocation. (If he could, he would certainly not have survived long after the invention of weapons, nor could the prolonged demanding helplessness of human infants ever have been tolerated.) He has a certain natural dislike for such activities, only it is weak and often overborne. He does horrible things and is filled with remorse afterwards. These conflicts are pre-rational; they do not fall between his reason and his primitive motives, but between two groups of those primitive motives themselves. They are not the result of thinking; more likely they are among the things that first made him think. They are not the result of social conditioning; they are part of its cause. Intelligence is evolved as a way of dealing with puzzles, an alternative to the strength that can kick its way past them or the inertness that can hide from them, and this is as tough a puzzle as any. And the preoccupation of our early literature with bloodshed, guilt and vengeance suggests to me that these problems occupied man from a very early time. I would add that only a creature of this intermediate kind, with inhibitions that are weak *but genuine* would ever have been likely to develop a morality. Conceptual thought formalizes and extends what instinct started.

To show that these suggestions about early man are not entirely wild, I want to say a little here about Bronze Age behaviour as seen in the *Iliad*. I choose the *Iliad* because historically it lies behind Plato and Plato lies behind the modern tradition I complain of. I do not make the mistake of supposing it a genuinely primitive document, applicable to Early Man As Such—but what can we do? It is one of the earliest we have which is available in a shape we can get to grips with, and the tradition is our own.

I want to go back to the question of rituals of submission—to the wolf that cannot bite its conquered enemy. Lorenz remarks, 'Homer's heroes were certainly not as soft-hearted as the wolves at Whipsnade. The poet cites numerous incidents where the suppliant is slaughtered, with or without compunction.' This is true, but the interesting thing is that the appeals were made. Counting carefully, I find that the score is indeed gloomy;

there are six appeals and six failures. Moreover, all the suppliants are Trojans, that is, 'the other side', and part of the point of the incidents clearly is to show Greeks in a position of power, exulting over an abject enemy. So far, so bad. But there is more to say. Achilles, refusing mercy, explains that before his friend Patroclus was killed, he used to *prefer* taking prisoners alive and selling them; it is grief and the desire for vengeance that stops him doing so any more. In fact, most of these incidents take place just as the war reaches its climax; plainly it has had more desultory stages, only Homer did not find them worth singing about. There are two other suppliants who offer large ransoms, and one of them nearly gets his offer accepted, only his captor's brother intervenes and prevents the bargain. The *Iliad* is of course an aristocratic document, which is why little is said of the commercial spirit behind these transactions, but it is clear that that was working vigorously here in the cause of civilization. Greed and laziness were, as often, a good counterpoise to violence. Should we assume that they were the only counterpoise, that there was no direct objection to killing the helpless? I don't think we can, for this reason. The Homeric atmosphere is extremely honest and unhypocritical; nobody professes high sentiments just for the look of the thing, and nobody would believe them if they did. Yet throughout the *Iliad* runs a most ambivalent attitude to war and violence; although they are man's noblest occupation they are terrible, piteous, lamentable, miserable, a curse and a disaster to mortals. And this too has the ring of a perfectly sincere sentiment. The God of War is constantly abused as a plague and a mischief-maker, without whom everything would go well. And in spite of the failure of supplication on the battlefield, much is said of the rights of suppliants, much of the anger of the gods against those who trample on such rights. And later Greek writings show that these suggestions were not intended or received as humbug; the rights of suppliants are an extremely serious matter with the tragedians. Nor are they enforced by social contract arguments, or by prudence, but simply by insisting on the horror of the act. Even the ineffective pleas in Homer are often very moving; in fact, it is this very ambivalence that makes the *Iliad* a great poem, instead of a butcher's catalogue. In short, the poem speaks with two voices; it deplors what it glories in, and it cannot get on without somebody to take the blame.

Whom shall we blame? That is the difficulty. In the *Iliad*, beasts are not needed; the answer to the problem of evil is always simple; if you can't blame the enemy, blame the gods.

I think this function of gods as scapegoats has been somewhat overlooked in the history of religion; it seems very important. Where a man feels guilty, and is genuinely anxious to apologize to those whom he has injured, there is much to be said for having been misled by a quite irresistible outside force. This preserves his self-respect, and also his friendship for the victim. As we say today, 'I just don't know what came over me,'

but the Homeric Greeks did know; they could specify Zeus or Ares. All the vilest and stupidest acts in the *Iliad* are due to suggestions from the Gods, and anybody who really wants to apologize simply states as much. The crudest case is when Agamemnon finally wants to withdraw from his idiotic quarrel with Achilles, and apologizes by explaining that Zeus drove him mad. At this the attentive reader will open his eyes, since we heard all about that occasion and it was one of the few when no god *did* intervene. But Agamemnon's reasoning is simple: If I did it, I must have been mad, and only Zeus could madden a king. *Quem deus vult perdere, prius dementat*. No thunderbolts strike him, for the explanation is universally accepted.

It almost seems a pity that the development of religion and morality should have put an end to this convenient way of thinking. They were bound to, however, and as the Greek notion of the gods grew steadily more dignified and noble, the problem, 'Whom can I blame for my faults?' became again pressing. I do not think it is any accident that Plato, the first Greek to press consistently the goodness of the gods, was also the first active exponent of the Beast Within. Black horses, wolves, lions, hawks, asses and pigs recur every time he mentions the subject of evil; they provide the only terms in which he can talk about it. This is certainly not an idle stylistic device; there is no such thing in Plato. His serious view is that evil is something alien to the soul; something Other, the debasing effect of matter seeping in through the instinctive nature. This treacherous element clearly cannot be anything properly human; it must be described in animal terms. And no particular animal at that, since all particular animals have their redeeming features, but a dreadful composite monster combining all the vices. In short, the Beast Within, whose only opponent is the Rational Soul. Certainly good feeling is sometimes invoked too, and given body as a Good Beast, but its goodness is supposed to consist in its obedience to Reason, not in its contributing anything itself. The White Horse¹⁴ willingly obeys the charioteer and helps him to restrain the Black; it is no Balaam's Ass to go hazarding its own suggestions. Accordingly the feelings named for this position are shame, ambition, the sense of honour, never, for instance, pity or affection, where the body might be held to make *good* suggestions to the soul. Plato's map excludes such a possibility.

Aristotle, though in general he was much more convinced of man's continuity with the physical world than Plato, makes some equally odd uses of the contrast between man and beast. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*¹⁵ he asks what the true function of man is, in order to see what his happiness consists in, and concludes that that function is the life of reason *because*

¹⁴ *Phaedrus* 253–256.

¹⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 7.

that life only is peculiar to man. I do not quarrel for the moment with the conclusion but with the argument. If peculiarity to man is the point, why should one not say that the function of man is technology, or the sexual goings-on noted by Desmond Morris, or even being exceptionally ruthless to one's own species? For in all these respects man seems to be unique. It must be shown *separately* that this differentia is itself the best human quality, that it is the point where humanity is excellent as well as exceptional. And it is surely possible *a priori* that the point on which humanity is excellent is one in which it is *not* wholly unique—that at least some aspect of it might be shared with another race of beings? Animals are, I think, used in this argument to point up by contrast the value of reason, to give examples of irrational conduct whose badness will seem obvious to us. But unless we start with a particular view about the importance of Reason in conduct, we shall not necessarily agree. If we prefer, among humans, an impulsively generous act to a cold-blooded piece of calculation, we shall not be moved from our preference by the thought that the generous act is more like an animal's. Nor ought we to be. The claims of Reason must be made good, if at all, within the boundaries of human life itself. They could be strengthened by race-prejudice only if it were true, as sometimes seems to be suggested, that animals were, in fact, invariably wicked.

Arguments of this form have, however, flowed on unchecked. One of them is used by Kant in his early *Lectures on Ethics*, where, in the course of some pretty sharp remarks about sex, he says that 'Sexuality exposes man to the danger of equality with the beasts.'¹⁶ But how can there be such a danger? The logic of this complaint deserves attention. To be *like* the beasts is not always considered bad, since we share with them many habits, such as washing and nest-building, and the care of the young, which everybody thinks highly of. The point might be that beasts gave more time and attention to sex than people, or were more promiscuous. But even if this had been true, it would not *alone* have shown that they were wrong to do so, or that people would be wrong to imitate them—not unless one had shown separately that animals always *were* wrong, or that people should never imitate them. This would be hard in face of such advice as 'Go to the Ant, thou sluggard', or 'Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves'. There are many activities, such as eating bananas, where the accusation 'You are behaving like an animal' could properly be met with the answer, 'But I *am* an animal'. We need to be shown—again, separately and within the context of human life—*why* a particular activity is unsuitable to people. Otherwise the reference to animals here follows a form often used in popular morality when mention is made of any group considered

¹⁶ Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 'Duties towards the Body in respect of Sexual Impulse'.

inferior—for the moment we will call them Gonks. The argument runs:

Some Gonkish practices are abominable
This is a Gonkish practice
Therefore this practice is abominable.

The only thing that could make an honest argument of this would be a real universal major premise, and in the case of animals such a premise has often been half-consciously accepted. If one assumes that *everything* animals do is evil or inferior, then the argument gets some force. The vices of the monstrous Beast Within are being projected on to actual animals.

Kant does not really need this argument at all. The dangers that he sees in sexuality can be, and are, much better expressed in terms more central to his ethics; they are dangers of treating people as things, treating them without respect, using them as means and not as ends in themselves. These are intelligible concepts. But in this argument too the notion of *humanity* is an odd one, and its oddity is again brought out by Kant's attitude to animals. Humanity is to be respected because it is Rational, not because it is conscious. We wonder about lunatics, about the old, about babies. Kant is adamant that everything in human form must be respected, but has he any business to be so? Animals give an interesting test; can we treat them as things? Or are they too ends in themselves? Kant says they are not ends in themselves because they are not rational, so we cannot have any duties to them and we may treat them simply as means to our own ends. This does not mean that we may be cruel to them. But the reason for not being cruel is that cruelty would debase our own nature. It is therefore our duty to ourselves to avoid this defilement.¹⁷ But *why* it should be a defilement we don't know. There seems no official reason why Kant should not say, with Spinoza, that animals, though conscious, are entirely at the disposal of man, and could be used as suited his purposes. If these purposes were otherwise important, and involved giving great pain to the animal, no objection could arise on Spinoza's principles, nor as far as I can see on Kant's either. There would therefore seem to be no objection to enjoying it either. I do not just mean that the objections would be weak: I think they would be meaningless. This view seems very forced, almost as forced as Descartes' contention that animals were actually unconscious. If you think cruelty wrong in general—which Kant certainly did—it seems devious to say that cruelty to animals is wrong for entirely different reasons from cruelty to people.

What I have said about Plato, Aristotle and Kant has, I hope, shown that the use of animals as symbols of wickedness has done Ethics no good, and that arguments based on it are irrelevant. But are they positively misleading? I think they are. In the first place, even irrelevance misleads, because it distracts. In so far as people looked for the source of evil in their

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 'Duties towards Animals and Spirits'.

Animal Nature, which was something they could not possibly alter, they were kept occupied by a contest they could not possibly win. They either gave their energies to trying to jump off their shadows, or grew depressed at the difficulty of this and gave up altogether. This defect is obvious in Platonism, in Stoicism, and in their influence on Christianity. The trouble is that Animal Nature is regarded, not just as containing specific dangers, but either as evil all through or at least totally chaotic, and without any helpful principle of order. It follows that there can be no sense in trying to organize it on its own principles, and no sense in studying it to see what those principles might be. Order must be imposed from outside by Reason or Grace—again a hopeless task, for why should a chaotic animal take any notice of Grace or Reason? But of course such animal nature is an unreal abstraction. Every existing animal species has its *own* nature, its own hierarchy of instincts, in a sense, its own virtues. In social animals, like ourselves and the wolves, there must be natural affection and communicativeness, and, in spite of our evolutionary *gaffe* in inventing weapons, it is plain that we are much better fitted to live socially than to live alone or in anarchy. Nearly all our most interesting occupations are social ones. Rousseau's or Hobbes's state of nature would be fine for intelligent crocodiles, if there were any; for people it is a baseless fantasy.

Nor does our richness in aggression disprove this. It is one of Lorenz's most interesting suggestions that only creatures capable of aggression towards their own kind are capable of affection. In order to distinguish some of one's species as friends, it may be necessary at the same time to distinguish others as enemies. At the simplest level, in order to express one's love for A, it may be necessary sometimes to attack B, or at least to threaten him. Ambivalence may be ancient indeed. However that may be he is clearly right in saying that aggression is directly bound up in most of the activities we value, and cannot simply be dropped like an old sock. This is part of our nature. But it does *not* mean that we cannot get on without bloodshed. For our nature is not Plato's and Nietzsche's Beast Without the Law. It is a complex, balanced affair, a structure like the Beasts Within other Beasts, subject to a lot of laws, and rather more, not less, adaptable than others, because where they grew horns and prickles, we grew an intelligence, which is quite an effective adaptive mechanism. Where fighting is made inconvenient, we can play chess or go to law. Even the Beasts Within other Beasts are very much more adaptable here than has been pretended. In particular, if they don't get what they want, they will accept something else instead. When they thirst for blood and cannot catch their enemy, they work it off by mock attacks on empty air or bits of wood or the surrounding scenery, or by making noises, or by driving off neighbours or casual passers-by whom they do not usually hurt. This is called Redirection. Alternatively they turn vigorously to some apparently irrelevant activity, which is called Displacement. It is very clear that with-

out these devices, most living creatures would long ago have pined away or burst from disappointment, since actually getting what one wants must be one of the world's rarest experiences. If they are possible for beasts, they are also possible for people, and of course we all practise them constantly. (The behaviour of anybody waiting impatiently for something will supply excellent examples.) But it is part of the mythical natural history of the Beast Within that it Must Have Blood—that it will not consent to swear, break china, play squash or write to the papers instead. What the limits of displacement and redirection for the human species are is not clear; we have all seen that they can stretch pretty wide. The 'non-aggressive cultures' cited by anthropologists provide some pretty examples. Margaret Mead's Arapesh, for instance, devote much of their lives to precautions against hostile sorcery,¹⁸ and Ruth Benedict's Zuñi Indians, while given to an apparently less sinister form of magic, openly use it as a means and a pretext for the control of aggression, which seems a rather different thing from not being aggressive in the first place. ('The fundamental tabu upon their holy men during their periods of office is against any suspicion of anger.'¹⁹) Such ways of conducting the lightning are just the kind of thing that Lorenz wants us to study; he merely suggests that seeing them *as* displacement activities may enable us to understand them better, that ethological studies might well be useful here along with the obvious psychological and anthropological ones. But it will be absolutely necessary for this purpose that we should honestly recognize our own pugnacity, and should modify that notion of the Characteristically Human which has been accepted both by common opinion and by philosophers. Neither Beasts Without nor Beasts Within are as Beastly as they have been painted.

I have been suggesting that animal life is much more orderly, and ordered in a way closer to human patterns, than tradition suggests. People may grant this, and still ask what it means to attribute this order to Instinct. This must of course be gone into before the term can sensibly be applied to people.

A very useful piece of terminology here is that of Closed and Open Instincts. Closed Instincts are behaviour patterns fixed genetically in every detail, like the bees' honey-dance, some bird-song, and the nest-building pattern of weaver-birds. Here the same complicated pattern, correct in every detail, will be produced by creatures which have been carefully reared in isolation from any member of their own species, and from any helpful conditioning. Genetic programming here takes the place of intelligence; learning is just maturation. Open instincts on the other hand are general tendencies to certain *kinds* of behaviour, such as hunting,

¹⁸ Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Cultures*.

¹⁹ Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 76.

tree-climbing, washing, singing or the care of the young. Cats, for example, tend naturally to hunt, they will do so even if deprived of all example. They do it as kittens when they do not need food, and they will go on doing it even if they are kept fully fed; it is not just a means to an end. But their hunting is not a single stereotyped pattern, it covers a wide repertory of movements; a cat will improve greatly in its choice of these during its life, it can invent new ones and pick up tips from other cats. In this sense hunting is learnt. The antithesis between nature and nurture is quite false and unhelpful here; hunting, like most activities of higher animals, is both innate *and* learnt. The creature is born with certain powers and a strong wish to use them, but it will need time, practice, and (often) some example before it can develop them properly. Other powers and wishes it does *not* have and will find it hard to acquire. For instance, swimming is outside the usual range of both cats and monkeys; in spite of their great agility it does not suit them, as it suits men and hippopotami; example will not usually bring them into the water, and they might starve if their food lay beyond it.

Open instincts of this kind are the main equipment of the higher animals. It is to them that we must attribute all the complex behaviour which makes the wolf's social life so successful; monogamy, cleanliness, cub care and inability to attack the helpless are loose patterns, but they are built in. Open and closed instincts however are clearly not distinct kinds of things; they are the extremes of a scale with many grades between. For instance, besides the birds with a fixed song pattern, there are others with various powers of imitation. Mocking birds imitate other birds' song and also non-bird noises; their programming is obviously a more complicated matter than a cuckoo's, and must include some power of selection. But imitating itself *is* an instinct with them; they will do it untrained and you cannot teach them to compose instead. Nest-building with the higher animals is like this; they have no fixed stereotype, like the weaver-birds, but a nest they will have, and if there is nothing to build it of they will do the best they can without.²⁰

Rats will carry their own tails repeatedly into a corner, still showing the same peculiar movements they would use if they had proper materials. In this way, every gradation is found from the stereotype to the quite general tendency. At the narrow end, perhaps we can say that no instinct can ever be completely closed. Even the weaver-bird must vary things a bit according to the branch and his materials; even the dancing bee adapts to the state of her digestion. At the wide end, what shall we say? Will the notion of Open Instincts make sense when applied to people? Or does it then become so wide as to be vacuous?

When behaviourists say that man has no instincts, they always mean

²⁰ W. H. Thorpe, introduction to Lorenz's *King Solomon's Ring*.

closed instincts. They point to his failure to make standard webs or do standard honey-dances, and ignore his persistent patterns of motivation. Why do people form families? Why do they mind about their homes and quarrel over boundaries? Why do they own property? Why do they gamble, boast, show off, dress up and fear the unknown? Why do they talk so much, and dance, and sing? Why do children play, and for that matter adults too? Why is nobody living in the Republic of Plato? According to Behaviourism, because of cultural conditioning. So (Question 1) who started it? This is like explaining gravitation by saying that whenever something falls, something else pushed it; even if it were true, it wouldn't help. Question 2; why do people ever *resist* their families? Why do they do what everybody is culturally conditioning them *not* to do? I have never seen a proper behaviourist answer to that one, but I gather it would go in terms of sub-cultures and cultural ambivalences, of society's need for a scapegoat and suchlike. It is a pleasing picture; how do all the children of 18 months pass the news along the grape-vine that now is the time to join the sub-culture, to start climbing furniture, toddling out of the house, playing with fire, breaking windows, taking things to pieces, messing with mud and chasing the ducks? For these are perfectly specific things which *all* healthy children can be depended on to do, not only unconditioned but in the face of all deterrents. Just so, Chomsky asks Skinner how it comes about that small children introduce their own grammatical mistakes into speech, talking in a way that they have never heard and that will be noticed only to be corrected. In dealing with such questions, the behaviourist's hands are tied by his *a priori* assumption. The ethologist, on the other hand, proceeds empirically, which is why I think we ought to like him. When he finds some activity going on among the species he studies, he doesn't look for reasons to regard it as something else, he simply starts photographing and taking notes. He sees it done, and from detailed observation of the context and comparison with other activities he gradually moves towards explaining its relation with other things which are done. (Thus; when herring gulls²¹ meet at the borders of their territories they constantly turn aside and pull grass. This is like nest-building behaviour, but the bird does not use the grass. Instead it follows other patterns which commonly issue in fighting, and at times does fight. Having thoroughly studied all the things it does, and compared them with its conduct on other occasions, the ethologist tries the hypothesis that this is Displaced Aggression—it is working off its anger on the grass—but does not accept this without careful comparison with other displacement activities and a full analysis of the term and its physiological implications.) He is not postulating any central cure-all explanation. This is where he is better off than many previous people who have made use of the term 'human nature'. *This*

²¹ N. Tinbergen, *The Herring Gull's World*, 1953, 68.

term is suspect because it does suggest cure-all explanations, sweeping theories that man is Basically Sexual, Basically Selfish or Acquisitive, Basically Evil or Basically Good. These theories approach human conduct much as a simple-minded person might approach rising damp. They look for a single place where the water is coming in, a single source of motivation. This hydraulic approach always leads to incredible distortions once the theorist is off his home ground, as can be seen if you look at Marxist theories of art or Freudian explanations of politics. To trace the water back to its only possible source means defying the laws of motion. The ethologist on the other hand doesn't want to say that human nature is basically anything; he wants to see what it consists of. (Even Robert Ardrey doesn't say that man is *basically* territorial.) So, if we must still talk hydraulics, he proceeds more like a surveyor mapping a valley. He notes a spring here, a spring there; he finds that some of them do tend to run together (as, for instance, a cat uses tree-climbing for hunting and caterwauling in courtship). If he finds an apparently isolated activity, with no connexion with the creature's other habits, he simply accumulates information until a connexion appears. Thus the 'suicide' of lemmings turns out to be, not an isolated monstrous drive, but part of a very complicated migration pattern. (Lemmings are good swimmers; they often do cross rivers or reach islands, but the reason they set off is that they cannot stand being overcrowded, a condition which drives them to all kinds of desperate escape behaviour.)²² Thus the grass-pulling gulls were not moved by an isolated monstrous drive for Destruction, but by the interworking of two patterns of motivation—fear and aggression—which are connected in certain definite ways in their lives in the context of nesting, and can be roughly mapped to show the general character of the species. *Understanding a habit is seeing what company it keeps.* The meaning is the use. The only assumption made here is the general biologist's one that there ought to be *some* system in an organism, some point in any widespread plant or animal habit. This is justified merely by its success.

The Nature of a Species, then, consists in a certain range of powers and tendencies, a repertoire, inherited and forming a fairly firm characteristic pattern, though conditions after birth will vary the details quite a lot. In this way, baboons are 'naturally hierarchical animals', since they travel in bands with a leader and what is pleasingly called a Senate of Elders, and show carefully graded dominance behaviour down to the meanest baby baboon. This is not 'disproved' by showing that it is not necessarily a brutal 'peck order', nor that the details of the hierarchy vary a great deal with different species and conditions.²³ Investigating these subtleties merely

²² See W. Marsden, *The Lemming Year*; W. Elton, *Voles, Mice and Lemmings*.

²³ For the variations, see Rowell, 'Variations in the Social Organization of Primates', in D. Morris (ed.), *Primate Ethology*.

strengthens and elucidates the idea of a natural hierarchical tendency. Nor is it disproved by finding an occasional baboon who is disrespectful or lax about his dignity; baboons 'naturally' have fur, and finding a few going bald will not disprove it. With this analogy in mind, let us face the fashionable question, is man naturally aggressive? First, what does it mean to say he is naturally aggressive? Now to the ethologist this certainly does *not* mean that he is Basically Aggressive, that that is his sole overwhelming motive. It means that he is aggressive among other things, that in his repertory of natural tendencies there is one to attack other members of his species sometimes, without being taught to, without needing to as a means to another end, and without always having provocation which (for other purposes) would seem adequate. This has been hotly denied. Now the ethologist must try to proceed with man as he would with any other species, to look at its behaviour impartially first and then search for causes and connexions. This will be easiest if he is not human himself, but is a member of another species coming here as an observer. So we will take him to come from Alpha Centauri, and call him for short the Centaur. This Centaur has at his command hundreds of years of observations on *homo sapiens*. One of the things that strikes him is that the creature often deliberately kills or injures members of his own species—not, of course, all the time, but still much more often than other creatures on the planet. He has authentic records of the Hundred Years War, the Seven Years War, the Thirty Years War and all the rest of it, along with Armenian Massacres, ritual murder, cannibalism, capital punishment, tortures, pogroms and holocausts, and he has no such records for other species. All this strikes him as quite as remarkable as the other distinguishing marks of the species, and he asks the human sociologist (whom we will call Jones²⁴ to avoid scandal) for an explanation. Things proceed like this:

Jones. It is all due to cultural conditioning.

Centaur. I beg your pardon?

Jones. They do it because their parents tell them to.

Centaur. Do they always do what their parents tell them?

Jones. They do so when their parents are powerfully convinced.

Centaur. Why then are the *parents* so powerfully convinced of the need for violence?

Jones. The parents are misled by wicked rulers, who find war to their interest. Modern techniques of brain-washing render this very easy.

Centaur. I suppose then that this slaughter bears all the marks of a culturally imposed activity? It will be desultory, etiquette-ridden, reluctant, like church-going among people who are not religious? It will, in view of

²⁴ Jones's arguments may be found well stated by e.g. the distinguished team of anti-ethologists collected in the symposium, *Man and Aggression*, ed. Ashley Montague, OUP 1968, and throughout Ashley Montague's own works.

what you say about modern techniques, be a much more recent invention than these documents suggest? It will be undertaken with obvious boredom, simply to gain a living and satisfy the authorities? It will need to be disguised by association with something more attractive to render it palatable? It will be readily abandoned in any disturbance, and will be more popular with the old than the young? *Now please show me films and records of various sorts of slaughter, in which these points are brought out. . . .*

That is one way the conversation may go. Another is this. Instead of cultural conditioning, Jones says that violence is due to *frustration*. That is to say, men never engage in aggression if they are not frustrated:

Centaur. But do men ever live a life that does not frustrate them?

First alternative:

Jones (emphatically) Never. Such a life is impossible.

Centaur. Then how do you know what they would do if they did?

Jones. Because what is natural is good, and aggression is bad.

Centaur. Species however are sometimes naturally prone to habits which for them are bad, as appears from your own records of the Irish Deer, the Argus Pheasant, and probably the Dinosaurs. Circumstances change, selection mechanisms are fallible, traits hypertrophy or stop being adaptive when the climate alters or the species invents weapons.

Jones. You do not appreciate the dignity of man. He is above such lapses.

Centaur. I apologize. Perhaps we had better leave aside the question of what would happen if he were *not* frustrated. *Are his reactions when he is frustrated not also a part of his nature?* Other species make full use of displacement activities; gulls pull grass, wolves growl, gorillas roar, sticklebacks stand on their heads and dig gravel. In this way actual slaughter is most often avoided. Man has displacement activities too (which seems in itself evidence of aggressive wishes) but they are not enough to keep him from slaughter. *Why not?*

Second alternative:

Jones. They hardly ever escape frustration, but this is due to a fault committed by nearly all parents and teachers, which deforms most human beings in early life.

Centaur. Then is not liability to commit that fault, and to be so easily deformed by it, part of the nature of the species rather than an outside accident? And please tell me more about the exceptional non-aggressive cases. Do they *never* want what they cannot get? And does this frustration never result in aggressive behaviour?

Jones. Maybe not, but then the educational fault in question, though unnatural, is always committed to some degree.

Centaur. What is the difference between saying this and saying that the fault in question *is* natural? You would then be recommending keeping it in check by certain educational methods, and of course you need not mean that those methods themselves are unnatural either. You would be using

one part of the creature's nature to control another, just as you do when you cultivate a child's natural prudence to counter his natural tendency to take risks. This is how education works; all educable species are complex. If I may digress to the problems of centaurs. . . .

The point that sociologists really mind about here is, I think, that human nature is good, it is good all through, and therefore if slaughter is bad, it has got to be due to something other than human nature. This is quite a different position from the official line that there is no such thing as human nature at all. Thus Ashley Montague, one of Lorenz's most excited opponents, holds *both* that man has no instincts, and that he has a complex system of things called Natural Needs,²⁵ the most important of which is Love. Man naturally needs only what is good, says Montague; everything evil, which includes all forms of physical combat, is alien to him and introduced from outside. He does however have a Natural Need to Swear—swearing is a wholesome and proper activity, of which physical violence is possibly a perversion under the corrupt conditions of civilization.

That such arguments conflict with any attack on Instinct as Such is obvious. On top of this (though they have often been useful in providing an excuse for treating delinquents decently) they are, when you come to think about them, vacuous. Where is evil coming from? Saying that society is to blame, not the delinquent, only shifts the blame from one set of human beings to another. If one goes on to say that *no* human being desires evil, who started it? Rousseau, in his crude early work, gave the only possible answer. He said that evil results from bringing people together (Hell is other people. . . .) While they were solitary, all was well, and that was their natural state. Men in a state of nature had 'no fixed home, no need of one another; they met perhaps twice in their lives, without knowing each other and without speaking.'²⁶ It was when they left that stage and invented speech that Society came into being and Evil with it. Now Rousseau's description of these Pure Individuals gives in fact almost the mirror opposite of the behaviour typical of primates. *They* spend almost all their lives in a group, leaving it perhaps twice in a life-time; they need each other constantly, they know each other intimately, they communicate all the time ('one chimpanzee is no chimpanzee'). Even the fixed home is there in a sense; they wander, but over a definite range; they return seasonally to well-known places. That is the sort of context in which human speech and intelligence have evolved; a solitary species could never have done it. Rousseau did see a difficulty about that; his suggestion was that in some uncommon natural emergency people turned to each other for help; then, no doubt, the chairman would convoke the congress of hitherto speechless elders, and raise the motion that the time had come to invent

²⁵ A. Montague, *Man in Process*, e.g. 161, and *The Anatomy of Swearing*.

²⁶ J. J. Rousseau, *Discours de l'Inégalité*.

language. . . . Since Darwin, people ought not to talk like this. Because society is the condition of man's living at all, let alone living naturally, and because there is some evil (namely at least friction) in any society, evil too is in some sense natural to him; he has, like any other species, his own natural evils. This is only difficult if you insist on the black-and-white approach by which, if he is not Naturally Good all through, he must be (all through) Naturally Evil. These extremes have always been popular with the moralists;

Square held human nature to be the perfection of all virtue, and that vice was a deviation from our nature, in the same way as deformity of body is. Thwackum, on the contrary, maintained that the human mind, since the Fall, was nothing but a sink of iniquity, till purified and redeemed by Grace.

(Fielding, *Tom Jones*)

The latter view is indeed even odder, and has been used to justify many iniquities. But why make either option? It seems more reasonable to treat man's nature, his original constitution, as neither good nor evil, but simply the raw material for choice. A man is good or evil according to what he makes of it.

At any rate, this is the ethologist's angle. Confronted with the habit of slaughter, he is not going to throw up his hands in condemnation. He will do what he did about the lemmings. He will study all the related patterns of conduct in order to understand the context. Lorenz, for instance, notes first that slaughter is often linked with some of the most precious elements in human nature, namely loyalty and friendship. People often kill in defence of their own friends and family; their pugnacity is often an aspect of their affection. And when they can be brought to see someone as a friend, it melts away. Also there are, in man's nature and not only in society, various trends contrary to slaughter. The wish for order is also natural, so is the horror of bloodshed. We are in conflict on that matter within ourselves, not waiting for the bidding of society. Were that not so, no society could exist.

Then we have to look at milder forms of attack, at aggression within a civilized society. Here Lorenz is very much interested in the *value* of aggression, in the relation of pugnacity to vigorous effort, in people who 'fight unremittingly' on behalf of the truth, or to defend the helpless, in the fight for reform and the fight against evil generally. Saying this is of course only suggesting a field for study. But I think it ought to make us very wary of people like Arthur Koestler who say that aggression is a Disease and ought to be chemically treated by pills or the like. Nobody knows how much of human life might go with it if that were tried.²⁷

²⁷ For a fuller and more balanced view of the position about ambivalence, see Eibl-Eibesfeldt, *Love and Hate*.

I have suggested that it does, after all, make sense to say that man has a nature, and even that man has instincts. Why would this matter to philosophers? I shall return in a moment to the consequences for Ethics, which are fairly obvious. More generally, there is a range of questions in the philosophy of mind which seem to be affected.

Traditionally, the distinguishing mark of Man, and also his peculiar merit, is Rationality. This is not an easy concept. It is not the same thing as Intelligence, since you could show great intelligence in the pursuit of something quite irrational. 'Rational' includes reference to aims as well as means; it is not far from 'sane'. Even 'intelligent' is sometimes used to suggest something about aims, something beyond mere consistency of thought. If someone consistently aims at the destruction of everything, or the greatest possible degree of confusion, people will tend to call him insane, irrational and perhaps even stupid. Yet you could presumably programme a computer to aim at these things. Why? Because Rationality, like all our practical concepts, belongs to the vocabulary of a particular species with particular needs. The Existentialist, in talking about *total* freedom, is exaggerating quite as wildly as someone who might tell us to transcend the limitations of space and be omnipresent. We are not disembodied intelligences, tentatively considering possible incarnations. We have highly particular, sharply limited needs and possibilities already—in return for which restriction, of course, we do get the advantage that our satisfactions, such as they are, are actual. There are quite narrow restrictions on what can possibly be rational for such a being—not necessarily limits to the possible particular desires, but to the policies, the schemes of life into which these can possibly be built. (Bobby Fischer, for instance, seems to be attempting a policy impossible to a human being in choosing Chess and Absolutely Nothing Else—if only because chess, like nearly all our activities, needs co-operation *within* it, and not only from outside. So did certain extreme ascetics in attempting Religion Quite Alone; so does the washing compulsive.) Not every form of life can make sense for a given species. Our liberty is negative; we can reject the virtues and interests natural to us, but not acquire a new set. And even if, like Kant, you treat man's particular constitution as a contingent matter, you must still suppose (as Kant well knew²⁸) *some* system of needs, some particular constitution to give matter to the form. There has to be something which counts as help, harm, interference, oppression, deceit etc. (The position of God and other spiritual beings has always been a problem here, since it is felt as peculiar if they have needs, but it seems much odder to say that their preferences are arbitrary. I shall leave this headache to the theologians.)

²⁸ e.g. in distinguishing the Human from the Holy Will, he explains that the terms of morality apply only to the former, and therefore make sense only under some set of subjective limitations. God's position differs *formally* from ours.

Finally to return to Ethics. If all this is so, something follows which Moore ruled impossible, namely that facts about our nature can have moral consequences. In spite of the complications of culture, there will be limits to what can intelligibly be called good and evil, right and wrong, for such a creature as man.²⁹ Our views on these points will not rest on unsupported intuition, nor on private feelings, nor on an inexplicable decision to be for or against them. They will rest directly on the facts, and among these, ethological facts will find a place. I will mention just two value judgments which seem to me even in the present state of our knowledge to be good candidates for such a status. One is, that overcrowding is an evil. Observation both of human and of animal behaviour shows that there are limits to the numbers that an individual can cope with, even if physical needs are met. On the behaviourist view this ought not to be true; if we are the creatures of our upbringing, all that ought to be necessary is to bring people up in circumstances as crowded as possible; once that is done it won't do them the slightest harm. Facts about people's reactions to crowding in existing conditions are therefore irrelevant, and so are all facts about overcrowded animals. Do we think them irrelevant? If not, we must not be bulldozed either by sociologists or moral philosophers into treating these arguments as invalid. My second example concerns Families. Here again details differ immensely from culture to culture, but there is clearly enough evidence to show that it is of the nature of man to form families and to bring up children in them; it is of his nature as it is of the nature of wolves or gorillas, but not of crocodiles, nor indeed of hamsters or polar bears, where the mother rears the young alone. Men need to be allowed to form families, children need to be reared in them, and it is *therefore* wrong to deprive them of the chance to do so. It is on these grounds that I would base the moral judgments, both that the family arrangements proposed in Plato's *Republic* are wrong, and that the South African Government is wrong to make people live in circumstances where family life is impossible. These facts (including, say, the investigations of Bowlby into the fate of institutionalized babies) are not just causes of my happening to make the moral judgments; they are *grounds* for them. The alternative would be to say, with the behaviourist, that people form families because they have been indoctrinated into doing so. This would leave it perfectly open to Plato or the South African Government to say, very well then, we will just indoctrinate them otherwise. I have given here two examples of a style of reasoning which is ancient, universal, and (to coin a phrase), thoroughly natural, but which has come under theoretical attack from various sides in recent years. Of course anthropology and sociology must complicate it, but they cannot abolish it. I hope I have said

²⁹ Cf. Geoffrey Warnock, *Contemporary Moral Philosophy*, 66, with whom I heartily agree.

enough to show that such reasoning is highly relevant to present-day problems; indeed, the more rapid the pace of change may be, the more urgent it gets to have some idea of what human nature can be expected to stand. If one likes this way of thinking, one will want to pay attention, among earlier philosophers, to those who have talked in these terms—notably Aristotle and Butler, those puzzling figures in the Hall of Fame, who have had their faces partly turned to the wall for the last fifty years under suspicion of being Naturalists.

I had better end by saying that I do not of course expect all the facts relevant to the nature of man to be turned up by ethologists. Other disciplines, equally relevant to moral philosophy, have suffered under rather similar tabus. Of course they should not be thought to take over the subject, but all are relevant; we certainly need history, neurology and all the social sciences. If we want to know what is good for man we must know what are his possibilities and roughly what is the price to be paid for each option. But among these studies, perhaps the resistance to ethology has been particularly strong and irrational. As Lorenz remarks, human pride had already taken two nasty knocks from Darwin and Freud; there may be real difficulty in undergoing the third and agreeing that *Homo Sapiens* is not just mildly interested in animals; he IS an animal. If we could do it, however, doors closed to Kant might be opened to us, and we might find fascinating things behind them. We need not accept the veto he laid down when he said "The end is man. We can ask "Why do animals exist?" But to ask "Why does man exist?" is a meaningless question."³⁰

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³⁰ Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, paper on *Duties towards Animals and Spirits*.