ARTICLE III.

SYMPATHY WITH THE LOWER ANIMALS.

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As we survey the manifestations of the altruistic spirit in our own times, we see that the organization and rapid extension of humane societies occupy a prominent position as regards the attitude of man toward the lower animals. The father of the humane movement in America was Henry Bergh, who, on the nineteenth of April, 1866, secured from the New York Legislature the first law enacted for the protection of animals. On the twenty-second of April of the same year the first Humane Society was organized in Clinton Hall, New York City, and to-day there are about one hundred and eighty similar organizations in North America. In our larger cities the work of these societies has grown to great dimensions and has enlisted the active sympathy and support of all good citizens.

It is with special reference to man's sympathetic relations to the lower animals that I am to write. I am not aware that this subject has been looked upon from the historical point of view, and, as this standpoint is well fitted to furnish us with both information and direction, I shall use it to set forth the general grounds of sympathy between man and beast which have been recognized in the past and which seem to commend themselves to the various dispositions of mind which obtain at the present time.

In the Oriental countries of antiquity, and in some of them to-day, man's sympathetic attitude toward the lower animals is striking and in certain instances grotesque. So far from finding exhibitions of cruelty toward the animal kingdom beyond that of necessary defense and the demands of religious rites, we see everywhere among ancient peoples a disposition to preserve and enhance their welfare. In India and China it was regarded as evidence of "a good and virtuous heart, and as meriting good fortune from the gods," to refrain from killing or maiming animal life, and to support certain animals as long as they live. In Egypt, India, and China, hospitals were established for certain injured and superannuated animals. Kindness is a part of the moral code of Mena, and in the Buddhist story we are told how "Sakka, the Great King of the Gods," when worsted in his fight with the Titans and fleeing in his famous "Chariot of Glory," turned aside, at the risk of falling into the hands of his foes, when the cry of young birds in distress smote upon his ears. "Let not these creatures," he said, "suffer on our account; let us not for the sake of our safety and supremacy put the living to pain." The orthodox Burmese will not kill even a wild animal; nor will he dig, except in sand, for fear of injuring or destroying life. But while animal life in antiquity was enjoying its golden age, human life was passing through its iron age of sorrow and oppression. The lines of Burns were truer then than now:—

> "Man's inhumanity to man
> Makes countless thousands mourn."

The explanation of this happy state of things for the animal kingdom is close at hand. To the Oriental the phrase "Mother Earth" was full of significance. They were evolutionists, and lived in the closest sympathy and communion with all the phenomena of nature. They found in nature their theology, religion, and explanation of life. With their theories of emanation, transmigration, and kinship of man and beast, we find animal worship in its various forms. In Egypt and India, deities were supposed to be incarnated in certain animals, while the belief in metempsychosis reached even to Greece. Some of the Orphists, as well as Pythagoras and Empedocles, prohibited the slaying of any animal and the eating of flesh, on the ground that one might be killing or eating an ancestor or a friend. Even Plato seems to have accepted the doctrines of the transmigration of human souls through the bodies of animals. Whether this fundamental feeling of kinship between man and beast is to be regarded as spontaneous, or as arising out of scientific reflection, is difficult to determine. This kinship comes to the front in most ancient mythologies. The general view was that man is a part of nature, and that all nature is alive, and that all parts of nature are kin. When we press the question we seem to come upon some scientific reflection, rather than a vague spontaneity of feeling. Thus in Africa and Asia, where the anthropoid apes are found, there were two theories as to the relations of man and the apes. Some held that the apes were degenerate men, while others regarded man to be developed from the ape. In recent times the Dyaks of Borneo and the Thibetans respectively held these views. The views agree only in emphasizing likeness or unity of sentient life. In examining various systems of *toboo*, we seem to come upon utilitarian considerations as we find, for the most part, those animals involved which are most useful and companionable to man. When we turn to early Greece, the scientific aspect or ground for sympathy is more pronounced in such physicists as Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Empedocles, who outlined with considerable detail the modern doctrine of evolution. They regarded nature as in continual flux, with nothing permanent but the law of change; so that, from the lowest forms of life up to man, there is continuity of life. "Mother Earth" was to them the parent of all, and from her ample womb all organic things in common have their origin. But, aside from any religious or scientific or utilitarian theory, it may be confidently asserted that antiquity furnishes many examples of a true altruistic spirit extending even to the lower animals. Plutarch tells us that the Pythagoreans, "in order that they might accustom men to the love of humanity and compassion, inculcated into their minds a particular care of being mild and gentle toward their beasts." This is sound pedagogy for all time. When we remember the barbarous games of Greece, such as the combats of cocks and quails, and the more savage sports of the Roman amphitheater, we should not forget that these were defended on the utilitarian ground, not of mere pastime, but of the example they offered to the people of courage and fortitude. That a mode of defense should be employed at all is sufficient evidence of the presence of humane feelings. Plutarch himself advocated kindness to the lower animals, on the ground of universal benevolence, and it is said that Appolonius of Tyana, on the ground of humanity, refused, even when invited by the king, to participate in the chase. Of Plutarch, Lecky says: "He condemns absolutely the games of the amphitheater, dwells with great force upon the effect of such spectacles in hardening the character, enumerates in detail, and denounces with unqualified energy, the refined cruelties which gastronomic fancies had produced, and asserts in the strongest language that every man has duties to the animal world as truly as to his fellow-men." Thus it seems to be clear that in pagan antiquity humane conduct toward the lower animals was advocated on the grounds of religion, of science, of utility, and of pure benevolence. The modern revival of humane feelings, like Humanism, draws largely upon Greek and Oriental modes of thought.

A somewhat different trend of thought is found in the literature of the Old and New Testaments. In Oriental thought the prevailing standpoint is cosmological, and some form of materialistic monism is usually presented. Theology and anthropology get no independent positions, but are rather incidents in a comprehensive view of nature. In biblical literature, thought begins with God, and culminates in man in his relations to God. The archetypal thought is "In the beginning God"; from this basis of interpretation the genesis of the heavens and earth, the vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms, is unfolded in evolutional sequence. Henceforth all thought centers in man,—his origin, nature, history, and destiny. Man is set apart from all other creations by a special act of the Creator. God breathes into man the breath of life, and man becomes by this act a living rational being. He is made in the image of God, and is given power over all things of earth. He becomes conscious that he stands highest in the scale of worth. Anthropology not only gets its first strong emphasis here, but is established as a standpoint which henceforth is parallel with, and frequently in conflict with, the theological point of view. In other ancient nations, human life was less sacred than that of many animals; but in the Old Testament it is of supreme value among created things. In theory Judaism is Humanism. One might suppose, with these anthropocentric views, which put man above natural and cosmic processes, that man's attitude toward the animal world would not be as sympathetic as among those peoples who view all sentient life as akin in mother earth. But when we examine the Hebrew literature we find the humane spirit as regards animals quite as active, though based on different grounds than those presented by India and Greece, as in any other ancient nation. Men and beasts are akin by virtue of having a common Creator, and animals are given to man as a trust from God. Hence Judaism is replete with legislation looking toward the welfare of the animal kingdom. Kindness is to be extended to the animals; they are to share in the Sabbath rest; they are not to be mutilated; the nest of the bird is not to be robbed; the ox that treadeth out his master's corn must not be muzzled; the animal strayed must be led home to the stall, and the helpless beast must be relieved by the passer-by, even though the owner thereof be his enemy. God cares for the beast, and it is partly on this ground he promises to spare Nineveh. There are even indications that animals have moral character and responsibility. For certain acts they are to be stoned; they shared in the fall of man, and some commentators find in Isaiah and Paul a strong expectation of their restoration. While this may be true as regards Isaiah, there are good grounds for doubting such an interpretation of Paul's words in Romans viii. 19–22, for the New Testament in general, and Paul in particular, puts a much stronger emphasis upon the anthropocentric standpoint than does the Old Testament. In 1 Cor. ix. 9, we find Paul implying that God does not care for oxen, and the spirit of Paul, like that of Socrates, is almost purely anthropic. In a well-known passage in Origen's treatise "Contra Celsus," light is thrown upon the different way in which the early Christians and the Orientals regarded men and animals. Celsus objected to the Christian doctrine of man as the crown of creation, holding that many of the animals were at least the equals of men in reason, knowledge, and religious feeling. This objection may fairly be taken as revealing the difference between the Greek and the Roman spirit, as well as a distinction between Oriental and New Testament teaching. Still we should not overlook the fact that the cardinal principles of Christ's teaching have worked directly toward the amelioration of all sentient life, and that Christianity has taken up some of the Oriental extravagances for which Celsus contended. We need but recall St. Francis preaching to the birds, St. Anthony of Padua evangelizing the fishes, and Jelâl proclaiming the gospel to the dogs. These extravagances remind us of the mediæval Cardinal Bellarmino, who refused to free his body from vermin, saying, "We shall have heaven to reward us for our sufferings, but these poor creatures have nothing but the enjoyment of this present life." Now and again in the history of the church we find councils protesting against cruelty to the lower animals. But while the church has broadened and deepened human love and sympathy by its great doctrines of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and wrought powerfully in stimulating a cosmopolitan spirit among men, her work has been almost entirely confined within anthropological limits. Only indirectly has she taught, with Coleridge:—

> "He prayeth well who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast.
> He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things, both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

When we turn to more modern times, the animal kingdom appears to disadvantage, as regards humane attention, compared with the more remote ages. A careful student of ethics in its various departments cannot fail to note that since the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries animals have been used more vicariously in our industrial system than in the religious systems of antiquity, and that the abuses and sufferings imposed upon the brute creation have no parallel in the more remote periods. The rise of humane societies in our century has its origin not in an effort to correct abuses that have always existed, but in the rapid rise of recklessness of animal life in recent times. It was the atrocious cruelty of the vivisection practiced in England, especially in the experimental lectures of Majendie, that excited revolt and set on foot this humane movement. I am aware that the statement that there is less humane sympathy with the animal kingdom in recent than in ancient times may excite surprise and objections; but that this is the case, and that at the same time it may be easily explained, is not very doubtful. The intense industrial character of our age in opening up new continents and districts, in working mines and lumber regions, in building cities and establishing manufactories, and commerce, in struggling for wealth under the system of competition, in inventing and using firearms, has reacted very unfavorably upon animal life. Cruel and needless sports have been so widely extended that now the world is full of complaints that the large game of all countries is rapidly decreasing, while many species, large and small, have already become extinct. Thus both business and pleasure conspire against both the domestic and wild members of the animal kingdom. Then, too, as conduct is always governed in some degree by one's view, we must take into consideration theories as to the nature of the animal. With the Renaissance there arose the theory that animals are unconscious automata, without real sensations and feelings, and that their manifestations of pain and pleasure are but shams. Even so mild a spirit as Malebranche could write, "Men are too stupid to see that the abstract proof of automatism is most clear and certain, with nothing to set against it but a confused presumption from their own senses." Although this was but a crotchet in a metaphysical system, it gave an indulgence to cruelty which base natures would only too willingly accept. Like the Spanish interpretation of polygenism in the West Indies and Central America, it was a comfortable theory for industrialism, but wholly brutalizing in practice. Nothing of course could be more remote from facts than this theory, unless it be the more recent theory, revived from India through Schopenhauer and Fechner, which teaches that all nature, even the crystal and atom, possesses sentiency and will. It is clear that our humane societies cannot be, or at least ought not to be, conducted on either of these two metaphysical programs.

Another depressing influence has been, and in a decreasing measure continues to be, the conception of nature entailed by the theory of "natural selection." It maintains that organic nature is a state of relentless and merciless warfare, a struggle for existence culminating in the survival of the fittest or the strongest. Although the phraseology of this theory is somewhat ambiguous, the picture of nature which is commonly held up to the world by the faithful disciples of Darwin is without design and sympathy. This yields an ethic, the leading principles of which are "Might is right" and "Each is for himself." This doctrine, false as thus stated and defective at best, paralyzes the moral sense, and sorely needs the revision which it receives from Mr. Spencer, Mr. Fiske, and Mr. Drummond. These able writers discover inherent altruism in nature, and seek to give cosmic sympathy a basis in fact and a position in philosophy. In saying this I venture no opinion as to the adequacy of a naturalistic ethic.

What has already been noted as regards theory and practice will enable one to understand how it is that in our own century there has been, and is, so much indifference to animal suffering, and especially in regard to those experimental exercises with animal life known as vivisection. One cannot help being impressed with the indifference of educational leaders as to the real status of the laboratories of colleges and universities on this question. That there is much idle and useless experimentation on animal life no one would deny; on the other hand, that the prevailing abuses are greatly overrated by sentimentalists is equally clear. The present enthusiasm for biology in its physiological and anatomical aspects makes it desirable that some means be devised to curb the recklessness of young and careless experimenters. In ancient Egypt vivisection was practiced only under state control, by a special class and for humane purposes. In Rome, according to Galen and Celsus, the practice was guided by utilitarian ends. Ought the modern state to follow Egypt by legislation, or, like Rome, leave vivisection to the humane feelings of the individuals and to public sentiment? In a recent canvass of twelve hundred and thirty-nine physicians in Massachusetts, two hundred and forty-three were in favor of unlimited vivisection, nine hundred and sixty-eight against unlimited vivisection, and twenty-eight gave evasive answers. It is very important that this subject should not be treated either sentimentally or hysterically. Those who meet the protests against vivisection by the cry "opposition to science," ought to show what vivisection has done, or is likely to do, for science. There appear to be some good grounds for the opinion that a scientific showing favorable to vivisection cannot be produced. Though many attempts have been made to show that vivisection has advanced physiological and psychological science, the inconclusiveness of these efforts suggests that we are still in need of a scientific reason for the continuance of the practice.

On the other hand, there are some sentimentalists who speak after the manner of Robert Browning: "I would rather submit to the worst of deaths, so far as pain goes, than to have a single dog or cat tortured under the pretense of saving me a twinge or two." These ought to show on what ground such a preference should be made. It is perhaps not sufficiently remembered that pleasure and pain depend upon the development of the nervous and sympathetic systems, and that like afflictions are not attended with like sufferings in the man and in the lower vertebrates. But, considering the well-developed system of the higher vertebrates, such barbarous practices as docking, cropping, and worming should be prohibited, while no vivisection should be allowed without a proper use of anæsthetics. That a judicious spirit prevails among the friends of the lower animals is seen in the refusal of the American Society to take action in cases where animals have been inoculated to produce anti-toxine for humane ends. The old Greek controversy, whether animals share with man the intellectual, æsthetic, and moral life, which is so finely reflected in the writings of Plutarch and which was revived by Descartes, Charron, and Chanet, although still in discussion, has at present a very considerable consensus of the most competent witnesses in the negative.

It appears to me, both from historical reflection and from observation of the present disposition of men, that there are three pretty well defined considerations that lead men to an exercise of mercy toward the animal kingdom,—considerations upon which we may rely for the prosecuting of the work of the Humane Society. I do not mean that each of these views will have like weight, but that one or other of them will appear as substantial to most men. These three points of view are the theological, the cosmological, and the anthropological. Some will be influenced by the theological point of view, that, as all sentient beings have a common Author, man, as the acme of the biological line, is under obligation, both in common sense and by prescription, to consult the welfare of the beast so far as it is consistent with his own. Others will be influenced by cosmic considerations,—by observation of the nature and habits of the lower animals, and perhaps too by the thought that man is, after all, a member of the same kingdom, of the same blood, and of the same general nature and process. But I suppose our chief dependence must be upon that somewhat vague but no less real altruistic spirit manifested in man which animates and impels all humanistic efforts. It is idle to deny that there is a spontaneous and disinterested impulse among men, call it love, benevolence, sympathy, philanthropy, justice, or equity, as we may. Whether reasoned or unreasoned, it is potent, and Mr. Sidgwick is undoubtedly correct in holding, when speaking of the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, that the only legitimate interpretation of "the greatest happiness theory" extends it to all sentient beings. However this may be, it is desirable to make animals an object of study, to allow children to have pets and to read books concerning them. Such knowledge generates sympathy, and he who understands and loves one animal is thereby disposed to respect the well-being of all. Finally, we may consider the Humane Society as an educational institution. While the discovery of anæsthetics and the various applications of steam and electricity have done much to raise the burdens of suffering from animal life, it is the presence and the work of the Humane Society that puts man consciously and actively in sympathy with the animal world. Its presence and organized activity is a humanizing influence in every city. Armed with the power of the law, its every interference in behalf of the suffering teaches that the humane feelings are not impotent, but alive in the community. Its collections of instruments of torture and its records of cases relieved or rescued, show that it actually has a mission to make sympathy and decency the atmosphere of all life. What Landseer and Rosa Bonheur did for animals in art, that, I think, the Humane Society may do in the industrial and in the domestic world. The animal life about us, though helpless and dependent, may be made companionable and beautiful. As we proceed in our work and become better acquainted with the relations of man to the lower animals, we may reasonably expect that there will be less starvation, exposure, annoyance, bodily injury, and cruel death imposed upon our mute neighbors.