

The Penumbra Series (2 of 6): Animals and Man

There are those who claim that man is just an animal. Now, I have no problem accepting that man did Evolve out of animals, and we certainly do have much in common with them. Most people who argue against this theory seem to do so more out of pride than reason: they don't like the idea of coming from another animal. Certainly the scientific evidence is overwhelming, with DNA samples showing a believable progression for the development of man from other species. And, if you think about it, even the Bible seems to support some type of animal theory as well. There is really are only three notable comments to be made concerning man being different than other animals (using the First Creation Story in Genesis 1:1-2:3).

The first thing to notice is that man is created last. Not really a big problem with Evolution, as man is a relative newcomer. According to the accepted theories of science, the first single-celled organism came out of the primordial goo about 800 *million* years ago, while some form of man has been around for a paltry 200,000 years. The second and third differences, however, have nothing to do with Evolution and point to man as being unique among animals. We are told God breathed life into man, whereas other animals presumably came alive after being formed. We also see that man was singled out as being in the image of God. For those in the Penumbra, however, they would point out these ideas as silliness, being only fanciful myths.

Sure, they claim, there must be obvious differences between man and other animals, just like there are differences between any other species of animal. But differences aside, an animal is still an animal. Man's intelligence and reasoning capability are obviously superior to all other animals, but they have some degree of intelligence and reason as well. And if we look backwards through time, it's easy to look at something man has or does which another animal appears to have or do. Other primates have opposable thumbs, other animals store food, other animals build pretty structures, etc. "Nothing man has or does is truly unique to mankind," they will say. But sometimes we need to look at Evolution forwards instead of backwards to see just how unlikely some of these assumed learned or inherited characteristics are.

Somewhere in France is a cave where some deer are drawn on the walls. They are deep in the caverns, far from the outside world. The artwork is believed to have been made about 20,000 years ago. And we can call it artwork as opposed to natural beauty because the positions of the animals suggest deliberate forethought in their making, no matter how primitive the style. "So what?" say those in the Penumbra. "Art, like everything else, has Evolved." Well, they are partially right. Since that time, art has certainly Evolved. But we have no evidence whatsoever that those drawings Evolved from anything else. But even if some older artwork is found, so what? Is there anyone suggesting that this or any other artwork was made by any animal other than man?

In the 800 million years that life has existed on this Earth, the most sophisticated non-human animal is no more artistic than the original single-celled organism. Yet we have found proof that man in his most primitive condition had enough Imagination to produce art. We don't know why the drawings were made, but no reasonable guess as to their purpose suggests a connection to any natural beauty other animals may have created. A spider web might be considered beautiful, and the nests of some birds might be adorned with something flashy, but the web was made to catch food, and the nest to attract a mate. Can we really suppose that man went that deep into the Earth to paint animals in an effort to attract cattle to slaughter, or to to catch the eye of a female wandering by?

For those who can now see the Penumbra for what it is and learn to separate the Light from the Dark when it comes to animals and man, so much clearer are the differences between them. Many animals communicate; only man has language. Many animals store food; only man counts how much is in storage. Many animals can experience curiosity and fear; only man experiences awe or anxiety. Or, at least, only man does these things naturally. Some animals do select the strongest examples of their species for reproduction, but only man optimizes certain breeds for specific purposes. And from this unique activity, man performed his first and most successful genetic engineering experiment 100,000 years before he drew pictures in a cave: the dog. I find it quite interesting that the dog, being a creation of man as opposed to Evolution, is the only non-human animal known to dream.

Of course, man has been able to teach animals many of these things and more. Some primates seem to have learned sign language. Animals can be made to be anxious by systematically abusing them. Animals can be trained to go against their instincts. But these examples prove, rather than discredit, my point. In all these cases, man has made animals more like us; animals didn't come to it naturally. And I picked the example of emotions and dreams deliberately. There are some popular but silly notions that man invented religion out of emotions (fear specifically) or as a result of dreams he had. More on that in **Part 3**. But Imagination leads us onward.

Imagination allows one to "experience" things mentally, as opposed to having to learn only from doing. Through such experiences, we find choices that are not instinctual or taught by example, which gives us Reason. From Reason comes Free Will, which is the ability to choose one path over another. And when we include the needs of others in our Free Will, we get Morality. And being a moral agent is a criteria for almost every philosophy concerning "personhood."

Now, if we accept that being a moral agent is necessary for personhood and that Morality is dependent on Imagination, then we find that Imagination is indeed the breath of life that makes a man a man. And we can't forget about the claim that man was made in the image of God. Now, to be made in the image of God can mean many things that are both legitimate and sensible, but I want to double back to the beginning where I claimed that man was the only animal who performed art. Art is the result of creativity, and God is unquestionably the ultimate creator. He who made countless stars in the sky can still make every snowflake a unique creation. When man exercises his Imagination, he is being creative and therefore clearly a reflection of God in a very real sense.

What separates man from other animals is Imagination and that which comes from Imagination. It is the Light of the Imagination Jehovah gave us that separates humans from the Dark of mere instinct.

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