I have been studying the traits and dispositions of the "lower animals" (so-called) and contrasting them with the traits and dispositions of man. I find the result humiliating to me. For it obliges me to renounce my allegiance to the Darwinian theory of the Ascent of Man from the Lower Animals, since it now seems plain to me that that theory ought to be vacated in favor of a new and truer one, this new and truer one to be named the Descent of Man from the Higher Animals.

In proceeding toward this unpleasant conclusion, I have not guessed or speculated or conjectured, but have used what is commonly called the scientific method. That is to say, I have subjected every postulate that presented itself to the crucial test of actual experiment and have adopted it or rejected it according to the result. Thus, I verified and established each step of my course in its turn before advancing to the next. These experiments were made in the London Zoological Gardens and covered many months of painstaking and fatiguing work.

Before particularizing any of the experiments, I wish to state one or two things which seem to more properly belong in this place than further along. This in the interest of clearness. The massed experiments established to my satisfaction certain generalizations, to wit:

1. That the human race is of one distinct species. It exhibits slight variations—in color, stature, mental caliber, and so on—due to climate, environment, and so forth; but it is a species by itself and not to be confounded with any other.

2. That the quadrupeds are a distinct family, also. This family exhibits variations—in color, size, food preferences, and so on; but it is a family by itself.

3. That the other families—the birds, the fishes, the insects, the reptiles, etc.—are more or less distinct, also. They are in the procession. They are links in the chain which stretches down from the higher animals to man at the bottom.

Some of my experiments were quite curious. In the course of my reading, I had come across a case where, many years ago, some hunters on our Great Plains organized a buffalo hunt for the entertainment of an English earl—that, and to provide some fresh meat for his larder. They had charming sport. They killed seventy-two of those great animals and ate part of one of them and left the seventy-one to rot. In order to determine the difference between an anaconda and an earl—if any—I caused seven young calves to be turned into the anaconda's cage. The grateful reptile immediately crushed one of them and swallowed it, then lay back satisfied. It showed no further interest in the calves and no disposition to harm them. I tried this experiment with other anacondas, always with the same result. The fact stood proven that the

6. quadrupeds (kwəˈdrəpədz) n. pl.: four-footed animals.
7. larder n.: supply of food or place where food supplies are kept.
8. anaconda (ənˈə-kənda) n.: long, heavy snake that crushes its prey.

Vocabulary

dispositions (diˈspə-zə-ˈzęntz) n. pl.: natures; characters.

allegiance (ə-ˈlej-əns) n.: loyalty.
caliber (kalˈə-bar) n.: quality or ability.
The difference between an earl and an anaconda is that the earl is cruel and the anaconda isn't; and that the earl wantonly destroys what he has no use for, but the anaconda doesn't. This seemed to suggest that the anaconda was not descended from the earl. It also seemed to suggest that the earl was descended from the anaconda, and had lost a good deal in the transition.

I was aware that many men who have accumulated more millions of money than they can ever use have shown a rabid hunger for more, and have not scrupled to cheat the ignorant and the helpless out of their poor savings in order to partially appease that appetite. I furnished a hundred different kinds of wild and tame animals the opportunity to accumulate vast stores of food, but none of them would do it. The squirrels and bees and certain birds made accumulations, but stopped when they had gathered a winter's supply and could not be persuaded to add to it either honestly or by chicane. In order to bolster up a tottering reputation, the ant pretended to store up supplies, but I was not deceived. I know the ant. These experiments convinced me that there is this difference between man and the higher animals: He is avaricious and miserly, they are not.

In the course of my experiments, I convinced myself that among the animals man is the only one that harbors insults and injuries, broods over them, waits till a chance offers, then takes revenge. The passion of revenge is unknown to the higher animals.

9. chicane (shē'kān') n.: clever deception; trickery. (Chicanery is the more common form.)
10. harbors v.: clings to; nourishes.

Roosters keep harems, but it is by consent of their concubines; therefore no wrong is done. Men keep harems, but it is by brute force, privileged by atrocious laws which the other sex was allowed no hand in making. In this matter man occupies a far lower place than the rooster.

Cats are loose in their morals, but not consciously so. Man, in his descent from the cat, has brought the cat's looseness with him but has left the unconsciousness behind—the saving grace which excuses the cat. The cat is innocent, man is not.

Indecency, vulgarity, obscenity—these are strictly confined to man; he invented them. Among the higher animals there is no trace of them. They hide nothlings; they are not ashamed. Man, with his soiled mind, covers himself. He will not even enter a drawing room with his breast and back naked, so alive are he and his mates to indecent suggestion. Man is the Animal that Laughs. But so does the monkey, as Mr. Darwin pointed out, and so does the Australian bird that is called the laughing jackass. No—Man is the Animal that Blushes. He is the only one that does it—or has occasion to.

At the head of this article we see how "three monks were burnt to death" a few days ago and a prior was "put to death with atrocious cruelty."

11. harems n. pl.: groups of females who mate and live with one male.
12. concubines (kàn'kōö-binz') n.: secondary wives.
13. at the head of this article: Twain is referring to 1897 newspaper reports of religious persecution in Crete.

Vocabulary

wantonly (wánt'nlē) adv.: carelessly, often with ill will.
transition (tran-zid'tan) n.: passage from one condition, form, or stage to another.
scrupled (skrōp'ld) v.: hesitated because of feelings of guilt.
appease (ə-pēz') v.: satisfy; pacify.
avaricious (ə-vər'i-shəs) adj.: greedy.
atrocious (ə-trō'shəs) adj.: evil; very bad.
Do we inquire into the details? No; or we should find out that the prior was subjected to unprintable mutilations. Man—when he is a North American Indian—gouges out his prisoner’s eyes; when he is King John, with a nephew to render untroublesome, he uses a red-hot iron; when he is a religious zealot dealing with heretics in the Middle Ages, he skins his captive alive and scatters salt on his back; in the first Richard’s time, he shuts up a multitude of Jewish families in a tower and sets fire to it; in Columbus’s time he captures a family of Spanish Jews and—but that is not printable; in our day in England, a man is fined ten shillings for beating his mother nearly to death with a chair, and another man is fined forty shillings for having four pheasant eggs in his possession without being able to satisfactorily explain how he got them. Of all the animals, man is the only one that is cruel. He is the only one that inflicts pain for the pleasure of doing it. It is a trait that is not known to the higher animals. The cat plays with the frightened mouse; but she has this excuse, that she does not know that the mouse is suffering. The cat is moderate—unhumanly moderate: She only scours the mouse, she does not hurt it; she doesn’t dig out its eyes, or tear off its skin, or drive splinters under its nails—man fashion; when she is done playing with it, she makes a sudden meal of it and puts it out of its trouble. Man is the Cruel Animal. He is alone in that distinction.

The higher animals engage in individual fights, but never in organized masses. Man is the only animal that deals in that atrocity of atrocities, war. He is the only one that gathers his brethren about him and goes forth in cold blood and with calm pulse to exterminate his kind. He is the only animal that for sordid wages will march out, as the Hessians did in our Revolution, and as the boyish Prince Napoleon did in the Zulu war, and help to slaughter strangers of his own species who have done him no harm and with whom he has no quarrel.

Man is the only animal that robs his helpless fellow of his country—takes possession of it and drives him out of it or destroys him. Man has done this in all the ages. There is not an acre of ground on the globe that is in possession of its rightful owner, or that has not been taken away from owner after owner, cycle after cycle, by force and bloodshed.

Man is the only Slave. And he is the only animal who enslaves. He has always been a slave in one form or another, and has always held other slaves in bondage under him in one way or another. In our day he is always some man’s slave for wages and does that man’s work; and this slave has other slaves under him for minor wages, and they do his work. The higher animals are the only ones who exclusively do their own work and provide their own living.

Man is the only Patriot. He sets himself apart in his

14. King John: King of England from 1199 to 1216, known for seizing the throne from his nephew Arthur.
15. zealot (zelat) n.: overly enthusiastic person; fanatic.
16. heretics (her-tikz) n. pl.: people who hold beliefs opposed to those of the church.
17. first Richard’s: refers to Richard I (1157–1199), also called Richard the Lion-Hearted, king of England from 1189 to 1199.

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18. atrocity (a-trás-té) n.: shockingly cruel and inhuman act.
19. Hessians (heh’anz): German soldiers who served for pay in the British army during the American Revolution.
20. Prince Napoleon . . . Zulu war: In search of adventure, Prince Napoleon, son of Napoleon III, joined the British campaign against Zululand (part of South Africa) in 1879.

Vocabulary
sordid (sör’did) adj.: dirty; cheap; shameful.
eals in that only one
do goes to the
exhaling that for
sh Prince help to
who has no

s helpless
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II, joined part of

own country, under his own flag, and sneers at
the other nations, and keeps multitudinous uni-
formed assassins on hand at heavy expense to
grab slices of other people’s countries and keep
them from grabbing slices of his. And in the in-
tervals between campaigns, he washes the blood
off his hands and works for “the universal
brotherhood of man”—with his mouth.

Man is the Religious Animal. He is the only
Religious Animal. He is the only animal that has
the True Religion—several of them. He is the
only animal that loves his neighbor as himself,
and cuts his throat if his theology isn’t straight.
He has made a graveyard of the globe in trying
his honest best to smooth his brother’s path to
happiness and heaven. He was at it in the time
of the Caesars, he was at it in Mahomet’s, time,
he was at it in the time of the Inquisition, he
was at it in France a couple of centuries, he was
at it in England in Mary’s day; he has been at
it ever since he first saw the light, he is at it
today in Crete—he will be at it somewhere else
tomorrow. The higher animals have no religion.
And we are told that they are going to be left
out, in the hereafter. I wonder why. It seems
questionable taste.

Man is the Reasoning
Animal. Such is the
claim. I think it is open to
dispute. Indeed, my ex-
periments have proven to me
that he is the Unreasoning
Animal. Note his history, as
sketched above. It seems
plain to me that whatever he is, he is not a
reasoning animal. His record is the fantastic
record of a maniac. I consider that the strongest
count against his intelligence is the fact that
with that record back of him, he blandly sets
himself up as the head animal of the lot;

whereas by his own standards, he is the bottom
one.

In truth, man is incurably foolish. Simple
things which the other animals easily learn he is
incapable of learning. Among my experiments
was this. In an hour I taught a cat and a dog to
be friends. I put them in a cage. In another
hour I taught them to be friends with a rabbit.
In the course of two days I was able to add a
fox, a goose, a squirrel, and some doves. Finally
a monkey. They lived together in peace, even
affectationally.

Next, in another cage I confined an Irish
Catholic from Tipperary, and as soon as he
seemed tame, I added a Scottish Presbyterian
from Aberdeen. Next a Turk from Constantin-
ople, a Greek Christian from Crete, an Armenian,
a Methodist from the wilds of Arkansas, a
Buddhist from China, a Brahman from Benares.
Finally, a Salvation Army colonel from Wapping.
Then I stayed away two whole days. When I
came back to note results, the cage of Higher
Animals was all right, but in the other there was
but a chaos of gory odds
and ends of turbans and
fezzes and plaids and bones
and flesh—not a specimen
left alive. These Reasoning
Animals had disagreed on
a theological detail and
carried the matter to a
higher court.

21. Mahomet’s: Mohammed (c. A.D. 570–632) was an
Arab prophet and founder of Islam.
22. In Mary’s day: during the reign of Queen Mary
(1553–1558), who was given the nickname
“Bloody Mary” when she ordered the deaths of
many Protestants.

To wrap up his argument, Twain presents the
disastrous results of the final experiment.

Summarize
those results.