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From a View to a Death: Culture, Nature and the Huntsman's Art

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ABSTRACT: The division between the natural and the artificial is itself artificial. But we continue to yearn for a 'homecoming' to our natural state – which means, to the identity with our environment which was the condition of the hunter-gatherer. Totemism is the thought-process whereby the prey can be simultaneously consecrated as a species, and pursued to the death as an individual. This thought-process has an evident ecological function. The morality of hunting resides in the maintenance of this dual attitude. An anthropological explanation is offered of the perceived rituals of hunting, and of 'guiltless killing'.

KEYWORDS: aesthetics, culture, field sports, myths, nature, totemism

Nature and culture used to be seen as contrasting elements in our human constitution. But nature is now a product of culture. Not only does human society shape the environment; it is human choice that marks off what is 'natural', and which elevates the distinction between the natural and the artificial to its sovereign place in the moral order. The natural world now depends on our efforts to conserve it, and therefore on our judgement as to what belongs to it. Moreover, our very perception of this world as 'natural' is an artefact, formed and nurtured by religion, literature, art and the modern media. When we seek our consolation in nature we are looking in a mirror that we created for this purpose. Nature smiles back at us with human features, since we have carefully ensured that it has no other. All that is truly threatening, alien and mysterious has been cut from the picture: what remains is a work of art. We strive to preserve it from that other and un-natural world – the world of machinery, of industry, of spoliation, production, consumption and waste. But both worlds are our creation, and we can fight only for the boundary between them, hoping that the part which consoles us does not dwindle to the point where consolation becomes a memory.

Nature, as we have invented it, is a source of the beautiful; but it has ceased to be a source of the sublime. For we meet the sublime only when we are confronted with our own littleness, and are troubled by forces that we cannot

control. The experience of the sublime vanished at the moment when Burke and Kant defined it: their descriptions were a kind of valediction, inspired by the premonition of a world entirely subject to human mismanagement.

None of that alters the fact that the contrast between the natural and the artificial is an immovable part of our worldview, and one of the cultural values to which we cling. We need this contrast, because we need to see our actions in terms of it. We need to distinguish those impulses which belong to mother nature, from those which involve bids for freedom. And we need to relate to other creatures for whom there is no such contrast: creatures whose behaviour stems from nature alone. It matters to us that we should be in constant relation to animals – and wild animals especially. For we seek an image of innocence, of the world before our own depredations, the world *without* man, into which man comes as an intruder. The burden of self-consciousness is lightened by this image: it shows us that we walk on firm ground, where the burden may from time to time be set down, and upon which we may rest from our guilt. All this is beautifully captured in the opening pages of *Genesis*, and the vision of Paradise – absurd though it may be from the Darwinian perspective – is the perfect symbol of the natural world as it would be, had we been able to produce it unaided, and without relying on the raw material of evolution.

The desire for a natural order is perhaps unknown to those who are truly part of it. But it is an immovable given in the lives of all civilised beings, and even if it cannot be satisfied, it will exert its power over our thinking, and make itself known both in the life of the mind and in the life of the body. It burst upon us in the writings of Rousseau, and his egregiously sentimental vision of the state of nature has exerted its charm over many subsequent writers. But it appeared in a more moderate and intriguing form in the writings of the German romantics, three of whom – Schelling, Hegel and Hölderlin – helped to forge the picture of our condition which has since proved most persuasive, and to which I pay tribute in this article.

According to this picture, human history shares the structure of human consciousness, and the individual life is a microcosm of the species, which is in turn, for Hegel, a microcosm of the universal *Geist*. The human soul and human society are both founded in a condition of innocence or ‘immediacy’, in which they are at one with the world and with themselves. And each grows away from this one-ness through a process of sundering and alienation, as it comes to recognise the otherness by which it is surrounded and upon which it depends. Finally each attains its redemption, as it is restored to the wholeness from which it began, but at a higher plane – the plane of understanding. Just as the individual self is realised by transcending its self-alienation and becoming fully and completely known to itself, so is society fulfilled, when the primitive unity with others is rediscovered, but in the form of a self-conscious and law-guided order.

The picture is dressed up by Hegel in the clothes of the dialectic; it is transformed by Feuerbach into a kind of negative theology, and by Marx into a

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theory of history. It survives into our century in many forms, and has some of the *Uralte* resonance that it also tries to explain. You will find it in works as diverse as Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* and T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. You will find it buried in the obscure prose of Husserl and Heidegger, distorted in the writings of the psychoanalysts or lifted into a brash light by Scheler. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it is now the most important image of our condition, and has a peculiar power to endure precisely in those people who have rejected the religious vision – the vision of Paradise, the Fall and Redemption – from which it originally sprang. Wherever we look in the modern world, we find this image actively colonising people's plans and projects. Almost everything that is believed in, almost everything for which a real sacrifice is made, has the character of a *Heimkehr* – a return from alienation, destruction and despair, to an image of home. But not home in its innocence. Rather home transfigured, become conscious of itself, and emancipated from the taint of bondage.

It is this image which dominates the thinking of the environmental movements of our time, and also of the campaigners for animal rights who are so often in conflict with them. Both are haunted by the idea of a primitive unity between man and nature, in which other species have an equal weight to our own. Both are appalled by the accelerating presumption which has alienated man from nature, and set him at odds with the order upon which he nevertheless depends. And both look forward to a restored unity with the natural world – a unity achieved not by innocence but by understanding, and by the self-knowledge and self-discipline which come from accepting our limitations.

Myths are necessary to human life, and part of the price that we pay for consciousness. Moreover, even if they give a distorted view of history, they frequently give insight into the human psyche. Deep down in all of us there are psychic residues, inherited from our hunter-gatherer ancestors, which speak to us of another and simpler world. It was a world in which we were at home, since we were adapted to it by evolution. Our instincts, our spontaneous perceptions, movements and social feelings, bear witness to that distant and never-to-be-recovered condition in which the separation of man from nature had yet to come about. And the strain of modern life would be unbearable, if we did not rehearse the spontaneous psychic movements that were implanted in us by the species, and which are as important for our proper functioning as it is important to a dog that it should bark from time to time, or to a chicken that it should lay an egg. This is the truth, I believe, in those myths of Paradise and Fall, which have brought so much consolation to our species, and also – in their secularised versions – so much needless destruction. Planted in us, too deep for memory, and beneath the layers of civilisation, are the instincts of the hunter-gatherer, who differs from his civilised descendants not only in making no distinction between the natural and the artificial order, but also in relating to his own and other species in a herd-like way. The hunter-gatherer is acutely aware of the distinction between men and women; he quickly unites with his fellows

in a common enterprise, and is focused by nothing so much as the chase. He is a spontaneously cooperative being, who cooperates not only with his own species, but also with those that are most readily adapted to join in his hunting: with horse, hound, falcon and ferret. Towards his prey he takes a quasi-religious attitude. The hunted animal is hunted as an individual – and the instinct to hunt in this way has an obvious ecological function. (Buffalo Bill was the very antithesis of the hunter-gatherer, a degenerate by-product of the civilising process.) But the hunted species is elevated to divine status as the totem, and a kind of mystical union of the tribe with its totem seals the pact between them. At the universal level, the hunter-gatherer *is* the tribe, which is the deer or antelope, conceived as a species. This mystical thought (an instance of Hegel's 'concrete universal') guides the hunter in the field. But the individual hunter is distinct from and opposed to the individual deer or antelope, which he must hunt to death. The experience of the hunter involves a union of opposites – absolute antagonism between individuals resolved through a mystical identity of species. By pursuing the individual, and worshipping the species, the hunter guarantees the eternal recurrence of his prey. Totemism is part of the natural ecology of the tribe, and its ubiquity is far better explained by its ecological function than by the far-fetched ideas of Freud and Malinowski.¹

We relate to one another as individuals, and the soul is the animating principle which makes a person who he is. In the case of human beings, therefore, the soul is the self. (In Arabic there is one word – *nafs* – for soul and self.) In the case of wild animals, to which we relate as interchangeable member of their species, the soul-idea becomes attached to the species. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the stories are told of the halcyon, the nightingale, and so on. These creatures embody in their species-being a soul which, in human shape, had been the soul of an individual. The thought is metaphysically incoherent. But it is part of the normal repertoire of the hunter-gatherer to think in some such way. And the idea of the species-soul is still with us. For the fisherman the individual trout on his line is also The Trout, the universal whose soul he knows in many instances, and which he loves with the greater passion in the moment when he pits himself against the mere individual who is its passing instance. This attitude is exalted by Totemism into a religious idea: the universal species becomes a sacred object, to which the particular quarry is a sacrifice. The quarry dies on behalf of the species, and thereby re-consecrates the sacred identity between species and tribe.

This way of relating to animals is less familiar to those who know only pets. For domestic animals have a kind of personality bestowed by our daily dealings. We treat them as individuals and they learn to respond as such. The hunter-gatherer, in his original condition, has little room for such an attitude. In time, however, he learns to enhance his powers by cooperating with other species – and in particular with hound and horse. The history of this process has been recorded only in its later stages – by Xenophon, for example, in his *Kynergetica*, which

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remains one of the most penetrating works on the art of hunting with hounds. Nevertheless, it is the beginning of a new relation to the natural world: the relation which stems from our role as a dominant species, able to conscript other species to our purposes, and to exploit their instincts.

The hunter now works side by side with animals whom he treats as individuals, in hot pursuit of the prey whose individuality is lent to it only temporarily, as it were, and because it has been singled out by the chase. The horse beneath him is Sam or George, whose habits he knows, and with whom he communicates directly; the hounds to whom he calls are Saviour, Sanguine and Sawdust, and he addresses them by name, aware of their individual virtues and vices, for which he makes constant allowance. But the fox – Charlie, the generic being who appears equally in Aesop and Surtees, in La Fontaine and Stravinsky – is merely incarnate in the hunted animal and will survive its death. For the brief moment of the chase, Charlie is an individual, to be understood through the beliefs and strategies, the vulpine strengths and weaknesses that distinguish this particular instance. Once killed, however, Charlie returns to his archetypal condition, reassuming his nature as The Fox, whom the huntsman knows and loves, and whose eternal recurrence is his deep desire.

Thus it is that the huntsman who has shot the cunning little vixen in Janáček's beautiful opera also rejoices to rediscover her in her daughter. And, as the music makes lucidly apparent, this rediscovery is not of the individual vixen, but of the universal Vixen, and of the natural context which provides her life.

Although this return to a previous relation with the natural world is now rare, it helps us to understand some of the longings and frustrations of those who seek for it. In the civilised world, where food is not hunted or gathered but produced, hunting and gathering become forms of recreation. But they awaken the old instincts and desires, the old pieties and the old relations with our own and other species. If your purpose in angling is to catch a fish, then how simply this could be achieved with an electrode, which stuns the population of the river bank, and brings it, afloat and unconscious, to the surface. But what angler would look on this method with other than disgust? To catch fish in this way is to cross the barrier between the natural and the artificial – it is to conquer another portion of nature for the world of machinery. Yet the point of angling was to return, in however well-protected a guise, to the natural world, the world unblemished by our footsteps. And that is the experience so lyrically evoked by the great tradition of writers, from Isaac Walton to Richard Jefferies, who have celebrated the sport as a therapy for the anxious soul.

More important, however, is the fact that industrial fishing, of the kind deprecated by the angler, is an offence to the totem. It aims indiscriminately at the collective, and instead of sacrificing the individual trout for the sake of the universal Trout, throws the universal itself onto the river bank. Like trawling and drift-netting, it constitutes a threat to the hunted species – and the threat, as we

know, is real. The intentionality of angling is of another kind. It involves a contest between the individual person and the individual animal – a contest which may be lost, and which is experienced when successful as a victory and a tribute to the totem.

Perhaps I have not found the best words to express this point. However, it seems to me to go to the heart not only of hunting in modern conditions, but of the longing which hunting expresses: the longing for another kind of relation with the natural world, than those provided on the scrubby perimeter of cities. In the contest between Captain Ahab and the white whale we see the growth of an obsessive emotion; but we also see something vast and primordial, a return of feelings which are lost to the ordinary trawler-man, and which make of whaling the noblest form of hunting that the sea still offers us: the only form in which the species, hunted in the form of an individual, is saved through the individual's death. For the single-minded pursuit of the individual is also a way of sparing the remainder – a fact known to all those for whom angling and hunting are not necessities but sports.

Why should people wish for this primordial relation with other species, and are they justified in pursuing it? To answer this question it is not enough merely to trace the evolutionary sediment which is stirred by hunting. Nor is it enough to re-cast the myth from which I began – the myth of man's fall and redemption, and of the homeward journey out of alienation. However suggestive this myth has been to philosophers, artists and writers in the romantic tradition, the fact remains that there is no way back, and that the only homecoming that we are offered is the religious one, which promises an *Aufhebung* not here and now but in the unknowable beyond.

As I see the matter, hunting (by which I mean the pursuit of individual animals to the death, as exemplified in angling, feretting or hunting with hounds) brings into focus the real differences between humans and other animals, and at the same time lifts some of the burden which those differences create. To summarise an argument that requires far more space than I can here afford to it, human beings differ from animals *systematically*. Unlike the other animals with which we come into regular contact, we are self-conscious, our thoughts involve 'I'-thoughts, 'you'-thoughts and 'he, she, we and they'-thoughts. Because of language, and the intellectual structure which language makes available, we do not live, like the animals, in a 'world of perception', to use Schopenhauer's phrase. Our thoughts and feelings range over the actual and the possible, the probable and the necessary, the past and the future, what is and what might have been, what will be and what ought to be. Upon these very basic facts – which can be summarised in the traditional philosophical way, by saying that we are rational animals – other and more remarkable facts depend. Unlike the animals, we have moral, aesthetic and religious experience; we pray to things visible and invisible; we laugh and grieve; are indignant, approving and dismayed. And we

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relate to each other in a special way, through the give and take of practical reason, and its associated concepts of justice, duty and right. Human beings are actual or potential members of a moral community, in which each member enjoys sovereignty over his own affairs, so long as he accords an equal sovereignty to others. The concepts of right and duty regulate such a community, and ensure that disputes are settled in the first instance by negotiation and not by force. And with all this comes an immense burden of guilt. Morality and self-consciousness set us in judgement over ourselves, so that we see our actions and characters constantly from outside, judged by ourselves as we are by others. (It is part of the function of moral dialogue, and the concepts of duty, right and justice, to generate this external point of view.) We become cut off from our instincts, and even the spontaneous joy of fellowship is diminished by the screen of judgement through which it first must pass.

Animals rescue us from this predicament. Their lack of self-consciousness neutralises our own, and their mute unembarrassability makes it possible to pour out on them the pent up store of fellow feeling, without fear of judgement or reproach. At the same time, we are acutely aware of their moral incompetence. Their affection is too easily won, and based on nothing. However much a man may be loved by his dog, this love brings warmth and security, but no release from guilt. It is a love that implies no moral approval, and which leaves the character of its object unassessed and unendorsed. For many people in the conditions of civilised life, the relation with a pet is the best that can be achieved, by way of satisfying the sedimented needs of the hunter-gatherer. But it is a relation that is essentially one-sided, with one party speaking and acting for both. The master smiles into the eyes of his dog as into a mirror, and finds there no independent confirmation of his doubts and certainties.

The hunter-gatherer faces and overcomes the guilt of his condition more easily than we do. Although Freud's explanation of totemism, as the re-enactment of an Oedipal murder, cannot be accepted, implying as it does that hunter-gatherers are caught in the emotional web of fin-de-siècle Vienna, it contains a profound truth. The willed identity between the hunter and his tribe, and between the tribe and the universal prey, affirms, for the hunter, his primal innocence. Just as there is no guilt attached to killing when lion kills goat, so are we released from guilt when acting from the imperatives of the species. At the same time, considered as species, the prey is identical with the tribe. Hence this guiltless killing is also a purging of guilt – of the guilt that attaches to the murder of one's kind. The prey becomes a sacrificial victim: the individual who pays with his life for the continuity of the tribe, by attracting the accumulated aggression between the hunters which is the price of their mutual dependence. This pattern of thought becomes explicit in the Jewish ritual of the scapegoat – a ritual, however, which treats the victim far more harshly than the prey is treated by the hunter. In the prey, therefore, a collective soul resides and the hunter confronts as he kills the

mystery of incarnation. In that critical moment a solitary individual embodies the moving spirit of the world, a spirit which becomes incarnate in death. (The comparison between Christ and the scapegoat comes to mind: but this is only one of many theological offshoots of these primal feelings.)

Although the conditions no longer obtain, in which totemism could be a real moral force, the desire for guiltless killing endures, and attracts to itself a powerful residue of social emotion. Hunting, shooting and fishing are forms of social life. Even when conducted alone – as shooting and fishing might be conducted – they are the focus of clubs, outings, parties, and festivals. For many people the true companion is the one with whom they can go fishing or shooting, the one with whom they can feel comfortably ‘side by side’, and with whom they can talk over the day’s events with the calm enjoyment of a common enterprise. And those who are familiar with the English countryside will know that hunting is not merely the occasional sport of the wealthy, but an elaborate social artefact, in which all country people from all walks of life participate, and which spills over into horse trials, point-to-points, the pony club, the hunt ball, hunt breakfasts and fun-rides, charity events, puppy shows and farmers’ lunches – in short, every available form of social communion. Hunting is also a rehearsal of social instincts, and a reaffirmation of our mutual dependence.

It is this, I believe, which explains the extraordinary hold of ‘field sports’, as they are euphemistically called, over the lives of those who participate in them. There is, in the contest between man and his prey, an inherent social meaning, a summoning into consciousness of the misremembered life of the tribe. Even in angling this is so, and if angling also has its solitary aspect, this is in part because the crucial transition, in which the species becomes incarnate in the individual, can occur only at the end of a single line. It is nevertheless the case that ordinary coarse fishing is a social affair. Much of the joy of angling resides in the concentrated silence of people working side by side along the bank, confident in their neighbours, and bound by a common enterprise.

There is another aspect to hunting, however, which also bears on its significance for us, in our attempts to conserve the boundary between the natural and the artificial worlds. Hunting is a territorial activity, and to hunt land and waterways is to exert a claim of ownership. The hunter-gatherer is at no time more attached to his world than when hunting, since hunting is also a ‘taking into possession’. (The expression is the one used by the common law, to describe what happens when a wild animal is hunted and killed by the owner of land.) For this reason, hunting rights and game laws have underpinned the structure of ownership and tenancy in our societies, and have been vivid subjects of political dispute. It is hardly necessary to mention the significance of the royal forests, the eighteenth century game laws, the decree by the French Revolutionaries that henceforth the people could hunt where they choose, or the monopoly over hunting exerted by the communist Nomenklatura in Eastern Europe. The

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transcending of the hunter-gatherer economy into the producer economy required that hunting and fishing rights be legally specified and defended. Thereafter you could hunt in a place only if you had the right to do so, or were the guest of another whose right it was.

This obvious fact is of some significance. For it has made hunting, shooting and fishing into elaborate forms of hospitality. In all societies hospitality is a necessary part of ownership, since it is the price paid for the social acceptance of private wealth. Ownership of land is particularly sensitive, since it places tangible obstacles in the way of those who do not enjoy it, and restricts the supply of every raw material. English law has been lenient and subtle in the distribution of land – granting rights of way and easements, enforcing covenants and prescriptive rights, and producing a unique combination of overcrowding and public access in a landscape which retains its domestic appearance. Nevertheless, even in England, the private ownership of land provokes resentment among those whom it excludes, and the Ramblers' Association, for example, has taken an increasingly belligerent line towards farmers who forbid people to cross their property.

The farmer who forbids the rambler is very likely to permit the hunt, regardless of whether he is plagued by foxes, and notwithstanding the fact that the hunt does far more damage than a quiet walker in an anorak. The reason is simple. The rambler is an outsider, someone who does not 'belong'. The farmer needs to justify his ownership to his neighbours, to those with whom he lives as one possessor among others. Hospitality extends to them, since they enjoy the same ancestral title to the territory from which his portion has been carved. Hence, when the hunt meets on his land, the farmer will usually offer additional hospitality, in order to confirm that the land is open to his guests. In Vale of White Horse country, where I live, it is normal for a farmer to offer port, sausages and cake to followers on horseback, and to make special provision for the huntsman, whose partiality for whisky is well-known. Towards ramblers, however, farmers feel no hospitable urges, regarding them as alien intruders who should stick to public rights of way (not of all of which are recognised by the farmers themselves).

Ceremonial hospitality of this kind should be distinguished from ordinary giving. It is an attempt to raise the relations among neighbours to a higher level: to confer legitimacy and permanence on the current patterns of ownership. It is partly in acknowledgement of this that mounted followers wear a uniform, and obey a strict dress-code that extends to horse as well as rider. The hunt arrives on the farmer's land not as an ordinary visitor, but as a ceremonial presence, endorsing his ownership in the act of exploiting it.

In the hunt, therefore, are revived, in transfigured form, some of the long-buried emotions of our forebears. The reverence for a species, expressed through the pursuit of its 'incarnate' instance; the side-by-sideness of the tribal hunts-

man; the claim to territory and the animals who live in it; and the therapy for guilt involved in guiltless killing.

But is it guiltless? Hunting, shooting and to a lesser extent angling have been repeatedly condemned as immoral: not immoral *per se*, since they may well be necessary if people are to feed themselves. But immoral in circumstances like ours, when hunting is a recreation rather than a means to food and clothing. The arguments here are involved and various, and there is no short answer to them. Nevertheless, it is not a sufficient justification for recreational hunting that it puts us in touch with needed emotions, or that it maintains the boundaries which fence off the 'natural' world. Even if it could be shown that hunting (in one or other of its many forms) is the best that we over-civilised beings can hope for, by way of a homecoming to our natural state, and the best proof against the tribal aggressions which otherwise beset us, this would carry little weight in modern times. It may or may not be significant that the first politician to ban hunting (Adolf Hitler) also created a society remorselessly bent on hunting down the 'enemy within'. But people believe that all such examples belong to the irretrievable (and mercifully irretrievable) past. Many people are also sceptical of the romantic *Heimkehr*. The best hope for our future, they believe, is to live with our alienation, to cease to look for some simulacrum, however sublimated and self-conscious, of the old tribal emotions and to look on the world as a vast suburban garden, an artificial and third-rate paradise, which we must maintain as kindly and responsibly as we can. This means taking the interests of all creatures into account, and refraining from pursuits which cause needless suffering, lest the spectacle of suffering should cease to trouble us. The comparative toleration of modern people towards angling stems from the fact that fish are so very different from us, in their appearance, habitat and behaviour, that it is no sign of a hard heart to look on their sufferings unmoved. The hare, the stag and the fox, by contrast, are near to us. Whatever the difference between our thoughts and theirs, we share the circumstances of our pains, our terrors and our death, and to inflict these things on such an animal is to act with a callous disregard.

There is something right in that argument. But it also overlooks the crucial fact from which I began this paper, and which is now at the back of all our minds, including the minds of those opposed to hunting. The natural world can no longer look after itself. We are guardians and keepers of the natural order, which owes its character to us. We could turn our backs on it, and cease to interfere. But the result would not be better, either for the animals who live in it, or for us, who depend on the natural world for our sense of what we are. If deer were never culled, Exmoor would contain nothing else, besides suburban houses, and the highlands of Scotland would be treeless crags. If foxes were never killed, lambs, ducks and chickens would be reared indoors, in conditions that no decent person should tolerate. If angling ceased, our waterways would never be maintained,

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and mink, coot and moorhen would drive all their rivals to extinction. In so far as 'bio-diversity' is a wished-for part of our third-rate paradise, culling and pest-control will remain incumbent on us. And it seems to me that the truly callous way of doing these things, is the way that merely attacks the species – as when poisoned bait is laid for rats and foxes, or electric shocks are used to free some waterway of pike. Such practices involve a failure to achieve the 'incarnation' of the species in the individual, and so to renew our respect for it. The true graciousness of hunting occurs when the species is controlled through the arduous pursuit of its individual members, and so impresses upon us its real and eternal claim to our respect and sympathy. This does not mean that hunting can be pursued in any way we choose. A rifle, in the hands of a well-trained stalker, may be a permissible way to bring death to a stag; but it does not follow that the very same stag might as well be killed by a grenade, a noose or a handgun. An animal like the fox, which can be cleanly killed only in the open, and which is never more quickly despatched than by a pack of hounds, requires great labour and the cooperation of three species if he is to be hunted in this way. If he is to be hunted at all, however, this is how it should be done.

The example is controversial, and those who believe in the rights of animals will dismiss what I have said as quite irrelevant. On the other hand, I believe not only that the concept of animal rights is based on a confusion, but that a true understanding of the nature of moral judgement will find no conclusive argument against properly conducted hunting.² Indeed, I incline to Plato's view, defended in *The Laws*,³ that hunting with hounds is the noblest form of hunting. And this because it is the form in which our kindred nature with the animals is most vividly present to our feelings. The pleasure that we feel in this kind of hunting is borrowed from the animals who are really doing it – the hounds who pursue, and the horses who excitedly follow them. The residual moral doubts are ours, not theirs, and they must be answered by us – by ensuring that the fox or stag has the best chance of saving himself, and the quickest death should he be caught.

NOTES

¹ S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, tr. J. Strachey, London 1950. There is another function performed by totemism, which parallels the one to which I refer. By worshipping his prey, the hunter also identifies with its spirit, learns to incarnate its spirit in himself, and so sees the world as the prey sees it. In this way he learns to understand the motives and behaviour of his quarry, and is able to track it more effectively. Totemism, on this view, is a kind of inverse anthropomorphism, and has a similar function. The theory is elevated into a functional explanation by Steve Mithen, in *The Prehistory of the Mind*, London 1996.

² See Roger Scruton, *Animal Rights and Wrongs*, Demos 1996.

³ Book 7, concluding pages.