

ANIMAL MAGNETISM

by Barbara Yoshida

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.

– Albert Einstein

CHARACTERS*

ANNOUNCER	Garrulous and self-confident
BUFFON	Powdered wig; ruffled shirt; pre-recorded video
SHEELA	A college graduate; feminist; not shy about sharing her opinions
DESCARTES	Long, curly dark hair and dark moustache; ideal role for a woman in drag or a trans actor
ARISTOTLE	White hair, combed forward; white beard and moustache; Greek toga
SPALLANZANI	Tall and lean; lugubrious demeanor; bald; sunken cheeks and dark circles under his eyes; no beard or moustache; wears a white lab coat, with sleeves too short for his arms
OWEN	Could be young, middle-aged, or older man; wears a suit with a scarf tie at the neck; holds a femur; speaks with a French accent
TOPSELL	Wears a suit and a set of reindeer horns on his head (like those seen at Christmas time); pre-recorded video
HEM	Dark and handsome; intense eyes; impressive build; dark hair and moustache as a younger man; grey hair, white moustache and beard as an older man; no glasses; safari shirt
WOMAN-AS-HARE	Naked, except for a hare mask; middle-aged; full-figured
PLINY THE ELDER	White hair, moustache, and beard; Roman toga; pre-recorded video
SINGER	White hair; glasses; tweed jacket with leather patches at the elbows; academic demeanor; communicates via sign language
COETZEE	Tall and lean; bemused demeanor; very distinguished; grey to white hair; white moustache and beard; speaks in a slow, methodical manner
ST. THOMAS	Fringe of red hair + a tonsure (the part of a cleric's head, usually the crown, left bare by shaving the hair); wears a monk's robes; a halo behind his head; carries a book and a quill; pre-recorded video
WITTGENSTEIN	Serious, Germanic demeanor; dark hair; wears a suit; speaks in German; pre-recorded video

* Roles are identity-flexible. Double-casting is possible.

ANIMAL MAGNETISM

Scene 1.

Lights come up on five podiums, each with a sign on the front with the name of the person standing behind it—DESCARTES, ARISTOTLE, SPALLANZANI, OWEN, and HEM. Another podium is stage right, facing the other five, with SHEELA behind it. ANNOUNCER stands stage left.

ANNOUNCER

(Brightly.) Hello and welcome to *Who's Your Choice?* Sheela Nagig will be asking each of our contestants some questions, in order to find the most compatible marriage partner. Sheela has promised to marry the man she chooses after the conclusion of Round 3. The marriage ceremony will take place right here on this show! Welcome to our five contestants in the first round of *Who's Your Choice?* And a big hello to all our viewers watching from home. Are we ready for Round 1? Before we start, Georges-Louis Leclerc, The Comte de Buffon, was unable to join us today, but he sent this video.

A monitor descends from the ceiling, showing BUFFON.

BUFFON

(Haughtily.) It is the apes' total absence of any power of thought and speech that constitutes the ultimate proof that man was animated by a superior principle, and this is how we know that man is a higher being than the brute.

The monitor is pulled upward, out of sight.

ANNOUNCER

Ready, Sheela? Go ahead and ask No. 1 your first question.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 1, is man a higher being than animals?

DESCARTES

A beast is a simple machine,
Whether land, sky, or marine
He must do what he's tol',
Follow blind like a mole,
The rules of the universe unseen.

A man is a man 'cause he thinks,
He uses his brain to make links,
But an ape or a vole
Without even a soul

Can never compete 'cause he stinks!

Since God is a being of reason,
And the world turns according to season,
For animals to command
Their brains to understand,
They'd have to be co-mitting treason!

(Authoritatively.) If you choose me as your consort, you will have power and supremacy over all others and an exalted position in history, as well. That's pretty sexy, don't you think? When we're alone at night, I'll even let you enjoy a superior position with me!

(DESCARTES gives a wink and leers at SHEELA.)

ANNOUNCER

Okay. What are you going to ask No. 2, Sheela?

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 2, is it okay for humans to kill animals for meat that we're not going to eat?

ARISTOTLE

When we moved from trees to savannah,
We found that the battle'd begun.
Hunting was war between us,
It wasn't meant to be fun!

The animals are prisoners of war,
They were never part of our tribe.
We can do what we want with them,
Like whiskey we're meant to imbibe!

If you chose me, little lady, I'll make you a goddess—you'll have your own statue in Rome. And I'll treat you like a goddess!

(ARISTOTLE licks his lips lasciviously.)

A monitor descends from the ceiling, showing WOMAN-AS-HARE.

ANNOUNCER

Ah! We have a surprise visitor.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Aristotle, you say the hare is timid, or shows her cowardice by her spitefulness for having a disproportionately large heart. How dare you say I'm a coward! But it's true that my heart is

very large. It weighs almost one and a half percent of my total body weight. In contrast, rabbit hearts don't even weigh a half a percent.

The monitor is pulled upward, out of sight.

ANNOUNCER

Time to go to No. 3, Sheela.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 3, is it okay for humans to maim and torture animals in the hope that we can gain scientific knowledge that may not even result from the experiments?

SPALLANZANI

To find a reason clear as mud to me
Why bats can fly at night alone and see
We pulled their eyeballs out and cut them off
And still they flew a line both straight and true.
We then removed their tongues and watched them fly
Again they seemed to know the way to go
So next we tried to plug their nostrils shut
But since they couldn't breathe at all, they died.
We blinded more and covered them with varnish
And still they flew without a single crash.
At last we plugged their ears with wax so hot
And every single bat bumped into walls.

(Rubbing his hands together in anticipation.) If you choose me, my dear, I'll give you a private tour of my lab—after dark, naturally! We can play hide-and-seek—see how well you can see in the dark!

ANNOUNCER

Well, alright then! Are you ready for your question, No. 4?

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 4, what does religion say about animals?

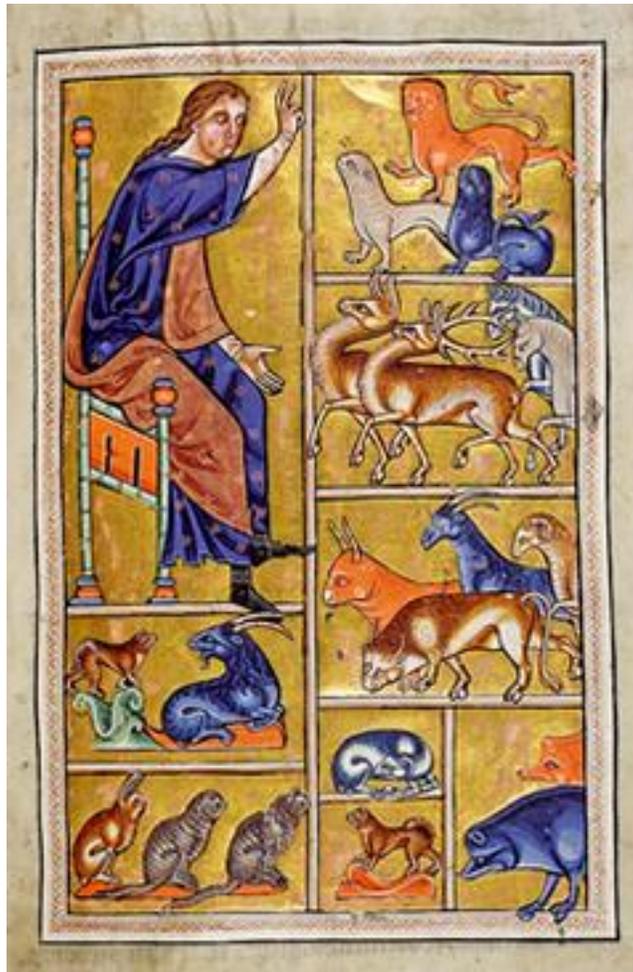
OWEN

(Smugly.) We know that mankind lost its innocence in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve became ashamed of their nakedness, so they clothed themselves. But the animals kept their innocence. They have no shame. They don't care if anyone sees them having sex or defecating. But the animals were also created by God, so we can see in their behavior an example of the moral values God hid there.

ANNOUNCER

I see that we have another visitor. Edward Topsell, author of the renowned 17th century bestiary, has something to tell us.

A monitor descends from the ceiling, showing TOPSELL. Projected stage right is a very large reproduction of a bestiary, showing Adam and the Animals. Above and center-stage is projected, side by side, a very large reproduction of The Beaver and a very large reproduction of Topsell's Hare. Projected stage left is a very large reproduction of Monoceros and Bear.



Adam and the Animals



The Beaver



The Hare



Monoceros and Bear

TOPSELL

Apes are not men, because they have no perfect use of Reason, no modesty, no honesty, nor justice of government, and although they speak, yet is their language imperfect; and above all, they cannot be men because they have no Religion, which (Plato saith truly) is proper to every man.

The monitor is pulled upward, out of sight.

OWEN

(Pointing to the illustration of The Beaver.) As we all know, the beaver's testicles are valued for their medicinal properties. If he senses that hunters are closing in, the beaver will bite off his testicles and throw them at the hunters to save his life. The moral for humans is obvious: To live chastely as God commands, we must cut off all vices and throw them in the devil's face.

If you choose me, sweet girl, I'll show you my testicles! No biting, but you can nibble gently!

ANNOUNCER

Oh dear. Bachelors, we gotta keep it clean. And finally, it's No. 5's turn to answer a question.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 5, you have hunted and killed a lot of animals. How do you justify that?

HEM

When it comes to big game, I hunt because my ancestors hunted. In caveman days, we all hunted. At that time, our ancestors had an attentiveness that we've lost—they were attuned to every nuance about an animal's behavior. Through hunting I've tried to get that back. It's a primitive experience, a stand-off—animal to animal—'cause basically, we're all animals. When we hunt, we're just following our animal natures. When you face an enraged rhino, you experience that primal fear and it's kill or be killed.

If you choose me, I will introduce you to your animal nature. I'll pin you to the wall and satisfy your hunger with savage fury!

ANNOUNCER

We'll have to leave it there. Tomorrow night, we'll find out which three of these gentlemen survives for Round 2 of *Who's Your Choice*?

(ARISTOTLE, SPALLANZANI, DESCARTES, and OWEN exit. HEM and SHEELA walk together toward the exit.)

HEM

Are you going to work tomorrow?

SHEELA

Nah, I need to prepare for tomorrow night. Don't know if you're gonna make the cut. See ya!

HEM

One way or the other, I'll be there!

(Fade to black.)

Scene 2.

Lights come up on SHEELA, sitting on a couch, and WOMAN-AS-HARE, sitting on a chair next to the couch.

SHEELA

I'm out of my depth here. Why did I agree to do this? I don't even watch game shows on TV! I'm attracted to Hem—physically—but I don't trust it. Isn't that just the biological urge to procreate? Hem says we need to find common ground. But we are so different! And the other ones are just so . . . arrogant! Such chauvinists! So cruel! A statue in Rome? Treated like a

goddess? Really?! I can play hide the sausage in the dark with Spallanzani? Owen will allow me to nibble his balls? Jesus Christ. What am I gonna do?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Why do you want to get married? I know you're not afraid of being incomplete without a man.

SHEELA

Of course not! I just want the male-female challenge, a strong man who's a worthy adversary, a clash of opposites, if you will. So here I am! Seven suitors and I've got to choose one of them.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Okay, just lie down, relax, and let me tell you a story.

(SHEELA lies down on the couch and closes her eyes.)

There was a young girl named Molly, and she was very pretty, with long, dark hair, big soulful eyes, and a sweet mouth. She and a young man in her village fell madly in love. Everyone said they were meant for each other. They talked of marriage, and they planned to set a date as soon as they had finished school.

But one day, the young man went to another village on an errand for his mother. There he saw a girl who took his fancy, and they went to the pub together. After a few lagers, he started kissing her and she allowed him to take liberties and do things he'd never done before. He started making trips to that village as often as he could. He didn't tell Molly, but instead, kept making excuses why they couldn't be together. Molly's heart was broken. She would never love again.

Then one day, Molly fell from her horse, hit her head on a stone, and died. After the funeral, she returned to her village as a white hare. Only her faithless lover could see her. She followed him everywhere, sometimes saving him from danger. But in the end, the white hare was the one who caused his death.

Soundtrack of Grace Slick singing, "And if you go chasing rabbits, and you know you're going to fall..."

WOMAN-AS-HARE

(Singing.) Tell 'em a faithless, lyin' man-child, has given you the call.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 3.

Lights come up on five podiums, each with a sign on the front with the name of the person standing behind it—OWEN, HEM, DESCARTES, SINGER, and COETZEE. Another

podium is stage right, facing the other five, with SHEELA behind it. ANNOUNCER stands sage left.

ANNOUNCER

Welcome to Round 2 of *Who's Your Choice?* Congratulations to our three survivors from Round 1, and a big welcome to our new contestants! And welcome back to Sheela Nagig, who will have the difficult task of choosing one of these bachelors. Before we start, Pliny the Elder has sent us a video.

A monitor descends from the ceiling, showing PLINY THE ELDER.

PLINY THE ELDER

The apes' uncanny ability to imitate or "ape" man makes them devilish. Man was created in God's own image, so this uncouth, hairy imposter must be the devil.

The monitor is pulled upward, out of sight.

ANNOUNCER

Sheela, let's start with No. 1.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 1, why is it okay to kill animals but not to kill human beings?

OWEN

Humans are created in the image of God. They have an immortal soul. Only human beings are destined for life after death. So it's a sin to kill another human being, but it's okay to kill an animal. The Bible says so: "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hands are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you."

You know I'm the right man for you, Sheela. Crown me your king!

ANNOUNCER

Let's go to No. 2, Sheela.

SHEELA

I know you're a big fan of bullfighting, No. 2. What do you say to someone who thinks it's cruel to kill bulls for sport?

HEM

Bullfighting is a tragedy, not a contest between man and bull. It is predetermined that the bull will die. But that's not the point. You need to get beyond whatever you think is cruelty and just

experience what you really feel. Forget whatever you've been told to feel, get past your preconceptions. This is an ancient ritual about life and death, mortality and immortality.

SHEELA

But what about other animals? You've said that you killed hyenas "for amusement."

HEM

(Shrugging his shoulders.) I did nothing that had not been done to me. You know how I was injured—almost died—in the First World War, right? If I got killed in Africa, that would be okay.

SHEELA

What about cock fights?

HEM

(With a derisive snort.) It's normal behavior for the cock. What the hell else does a fighting cock like to do?

Choose me and I'll show you my fighting cock!

ANNOUNCER

Okay, bachelors, keep it clean. Let's see what No. 3 has to say, Sheela.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 3, are animals able to feel pain or anticipate death?

DESCARTES

Since souls have been given to man
But not to an or-ang-u-tan,
The ape's not aware
That yesterday he was there
And for tomorrow he might need to plan!

An animal cannot feel pain
His longing for pleasure's in vain
He doesn't know he'll die
So he doesn't wonder why
And he thinks it's absurd to complain!

You know how I feel about you, Sheela. You must choose me!

ANNOUNCER

Now, let's go on to a question for No. 4.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 4, are animals able to feel pain or anticipate death?

SINGER

(ANNOUNCER *translates; subtitles appear in the film version.*) There is no argument among scientists as to whether conscious awareness exists in nonhuman animals. We know that chimpanzees, dogs, pigs, and other animals are able to act independently, relate to others, be self-aware, and exhibit other capacities that give value to life. And animals give every evidence that they feel pleasure and pain. They're certainly capable of suffering. They also exhibit emotions that are clearly similar to what we call happiness, sadness, fear, despair, love, jealousy, fury, compassion, and distress. When cattle are shoved through the chute to the "kill box," their sensitivity and heightened sense of smell tells them death is near. They can feel the fear of the other cattle and smell the death ahead of them. And it is well documented that animals feel grief. We know that elephants have some understanding of death; they mourn their dead. Sometimes they cover the dead with leaves and twigs. If they come upon an elephant skeleton, they turn the bones over, pick them up, and lovingly, tenderly caress every part.

If you choose me to be your companion, I will respect your creativity and imagination as much as I respect your intellect.

ANNOUNCER

Edward Topsell has something to say. Let's watch his video, shall we?

A monitor descends from the ceiling, showing TOPSELL.

TOPSELL

There is no creature among all the beasts of the world which hath so great and ample demonstration of the power and wisdom of almighty God as the Elephant.

The monitor is pulled upward, out of sight.

ANNOUNCER

Let's see how No. 5 answers your question, Sheela.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 5, how important is it for an animal to think? To reason? To have a soul?

COETZEE

We should not be asking if we have anything in common with animals, whether it's reason, self-consciousness, or a soul. The heart is the important thing. It is where we find sympathy, that faculty that allows us to share the being of another. I believe there is no limit to how far we can think ourselves into another being. There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination. When Descartes says "cogito ergo sum," he is saying that a living being that does not do what

we call thinking is somehow inferior. But I say the important thing is fullness, the sensation of being a body with limbs that have extension in space, of being alive to the world.

Choose me! Choose me! I will be your loving companion forever!

ANNOUNCER

That's all we have for tonight's episode of *Who's Your Choice?* Tune in tomorrow night to find out who will make it to Round 3!

(DESCARTES, OWEN, COETZEE, and SINGER exit. HEM and SHEELA walk together toward the exit.)

HEM

Are you going to work tomorrow?

SHEELA

Yeah, I'll be there. See you in the morning.

HEM

Right, see you then.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 4.

Lights come up on SHEELA, lying on the couch, eyes closed, and WOMAN-AS-HARE, sitting on a chair next to the couch.

SHEELA

What's with these religious guys? I don't know anyone who takes the Bible that literally. And the bullfighting thing. I can see the ritual part, but killing animals for amusement? How can I marry a man who hunts lions and tigers for sport? At least Singer acknowledges that animals feel pain. And Coetzee talks about the heart and the importance of sympathy. But most of these guys have no passion! They're so dry! Bright intellectuals, yeah, but I can't see myself having sex with any of them!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

You love the fact that Hem is all about the primitive experience, relating to an animal face to face, one-on-one. Primitivism is an attitude that is deeply masculine, essentially masculinist. And at the end of the day, something about it is extremely attractive. Are you afraid of your own animal nature? The way your animal self is drawing you toward him, as if it's a power you can't control?

SHEELA

Who wants to feel out of control? To tell you the truth, I'm a bit afraid of Hem. Not physically, he'd never hit me. I'm afraid of being overwhelmed by him—of losing myself. He's very dominant, you know, so strong and confident. He could be the instrument of my destruction.

Don't worry, everything will be okay. Let me tell you a story.

I knew a man who was out with his greyhound and he rose a hare and she cut back and up again, you know the way a hare runs, its prodigious leaping, its wide circles and sudden turns, and all the while, the hound was gaining on her. The hare headed for a house and went round it a couple of times, and then she leapt for an open window and the dog caught her hind leg and grazed it, but she got through the window. The man went in the house, 'cause he was suspicious. An old woman was sitting by the fire, and didn't he notice blood on the floor near her foot.

(Fade to black.)

Scene 5.

Lights come up on a table with a large meat grinder, center-stage. On the wall stage right is a very large reproduction of Rousseau's The Dream. Hanging above and center-stage is a very large reproduction of Boucher's Odalisque. On the wall stage left is a very large reproduction of Barye's Jaguar Devouring a Hare. SHEELA and HEM wear white aprons splattered with blood. Throughout the scene, SHEELA feeds hunks of raw beef into the grinder and HEM turns the crank as the meat falls toward the audience, into a large bowl. At least one animal carcass hangs above or next to the table. A small wooden box is behind the table. A megaphone is inside the box.



The Dream



Odalisque



Jaguar Devouring a Hare

HEM

(Pontificating.) We're all animals, part of nature's plan. The survival of the fittest. Perfectly natural. Eat or be eaten. Went on a lot of safaris, months at a time. On the Kapiti Plain, we shot impalas for their horns. Always hoped to get a greater kudu bull. Makes a great trophy 'cause of its spiral horns.

SHEELA

Makes you horny? Just looking at those heads on the wall with their big horns?

HEM

You're crazy. They're just beautiful things. And I like lookin' at 'em.

SHEELA

A beautiful animal, a naked woman.... Same thing, right?

(SHEELA points to the reproduction of Boucher's painting.)

HEM

Huh?

SHEELA

The male gaze.

HEM

The what?

SHEELA

When you put a tiger head on the wall, you strip it of anything except its beauty, its powerlessness, and its ultimate defeat—its death.

HEM

(Defensively.) Nothing wrong with admiring an animal for its beauty—or a woman. And death can be part of a ritual that is beautiful and honorable.

SHEELA

Like bullfighting?

HEM

Exactly.

SHEELA

During the TV show, you said the bull's death is predetermined. Is it the same when you kill a cheetah?

HEM

It's different in Africa, not the same as a bullfight.

SHEELA

What then? Is it an essential drama whereby you reduce the animal to your dimensions?

HEM

(Hesitantly, sensing a trap.) Something like that.

(SHEELA stops feeding meat into the grinder and turns to HEM.)

SHEELA

But it's not a fair fight! You have guns!

HEM

Goddammit! No common ground here. Can't we talk about something else? Something we might agree on? *(Lasciviously.)* Come on. I know you want me.

(SHEELA crosses her arms under her breasts in a defensive posture, then turns to start feeding meat again into the grinder.)

(Defensively.) I honor their beauty and their deaths.

(SHEELA points at Barye's Jaguar Devouring a Hare and shudders.)

SHEELA

What's beautiful about an animal is the way it moves, the currents of life that move within it, the way it hunts, or the way it uses skill and intelligence to escape the hunters. A lion's social bonds with family, its heightened senses that can detect subtle shifts in the environment, these qualities are not acknowledged if you reduce it to a symbol of your supposed supremacy.

HEM

(Defensively.) Bullshit! We are superior! We have greater intelligence.

SHEELA

But what kind of intelligence? Your mind is operating on a one-dimensional, horizontal plane. It's only concerned with contemporary events and scientific materialism. In contrast, the Celtic¹ mind, for example, operates on a vertical plane. It encompasses spiritual and psychic experiences as well, and all sentient beings.

HEM

(Patronizingly.) Well, aren't you special. What's your beef with science?

SHEELA

Nothing. It's just that scientists feel they must "master" nature. And nature has always been feminine, right? The "rape of nature." It's like sexual conquest.

HEM

Hold on, I don't think—

SHEELA

(Cutting him off.) Scientific thought is masculine, and the domain that needs to be conquered is feminine. The object of study is female, the female is object.

HEM

But I like women! Just 'cause I'm a man, that doesn't mean—

SHEELA

What about zoos? You okay with putting animals in cages?

HEM

There's your equal opportunity gaze. Women can admire their beauty, too.

SHEELA

As the animals pace back and forth in their confinement. There's no way an animal can experience fullness of being when it's in confinement.

¹ Pronounced *Keltick*

HEM

Not my problem.

SHEELA

How about using them for experiments so we can have some new lipstick?

HEM

(With a look of disbelief.) Some scientific experiments are necessary. You know that. No need to get all sentimental about it. We been killin' animals since we started walkin' on two legs. When Paleolithic man butchered a wildebeest, he said, "I am not that animal, but that heart, those lungs, that stomach is like mine." Animals helped us define who we are. We heard them scream in fear, growl in anger, and we saw they had feelings like ours. We were just beginning to sense our inner world. They taught us about the outside and the inside. Objective, rational observation of animals outside; instinct, imagination, and thoughts inside.

(SHEELA purses her lips and reflects, continuing to feed chunks of meet into the grinder.)

SHEELA

I'm impressed. You've given some thought to this, and you're right. We need animals. We've always needed them. But Paleolithic man didn't kill an animal for its beauty. Or for some aphrodisiac they thought they could get from a rhinoceros horn!

HEM

(With scornful derision.) This is about how to be a man! I like to shoot and I like to kill. If you've never hunted, you can't have any idea. The discipline, the single-mindedness, the patience, the concentration. But also the ritual, the camaraderie you share with a bunch of men. Can't beat it. When we get that tiger skin—

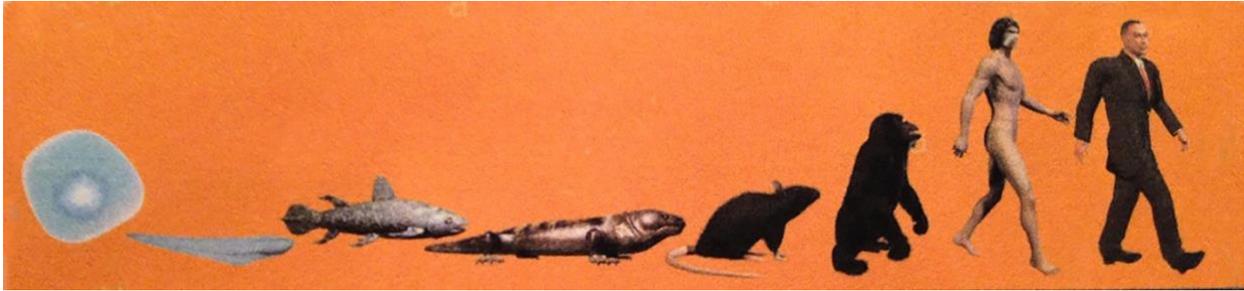
SHEELA

(Jumping in aggressively and contemptuously.) So you can "honor" it by using it as a rug to walk on? Perfect! That's nothing more than the glorification of a power struggle that shows man is supreme and can lord it over everything.

HEM

(Sitting up straighter.) We are supreme! Darwin said humans are the most evolved species, didn't he? So who cares if some other species goes extinct?

Replacing the reproduction of Rousseau's The Dream stage right is a large illustration of a progression from a single-celled organism to modern-day man.



SHEELA

Actually, Darwin didn't say that. If a buzzard is better adapted to its environment than we are, it's more evolved. (*She points to the projected image.*) That illustration is offensive!

HEM

But everybody says this represents Darwin's theory of evolution.

SHEELA

I know! Well, they're wrong. That illustration is totally false. A progression from the primitive to the civilized? Evolution is not a linear progression! That's a totally Victorian way of thinking, like the male gaze!

HEM

(*Dismissively.*) The male gaze again? Jesus wept. You need to lighten up! I don't know why I keep looking for common ground – there's nothing we can agree on! (*Leering.*) But I still want to jump your bones. (*Pause.*) And I still say our brains are larger. That's what makes us superior!

SHEELA

Our brains are larger, for sure, but that doesn't mean we're superior. Darwin showed how we evolved over time. But other life forms continued to evolve, too.

HEM

(*Angrily.*) What's the matter with you?! It's obvious— we're more evolved than anything else!

SHEELA

We're one of the least evolved species. Science says human evolution has sped up in the past 10,000 years, but we are changing our environment even faster.

HEM

What do you mean?

SHEELA

Polluted air and water, processed food, and overcrowding, leading to stress, anger, diabetes, and high blood pressure. So we're less adapted to our environment all the time.

HEM

If you're so smart, name some species that are adapting better!

SHEELA

Bacteria, for one thing. In a decade, bacteria can produce 200,000 generations! That's a lot of chances for natural selection to keep what's good for survival and jettison any traits that are bad.

HEM

What's so important about bacteria, anyway?

SHEELA

They can kill us! There are new strains of bacteria all the time that are resistant to antibiotics. Science can't even keep up!

(HEM walks to the wooden box and pulls a megaphone out of it. He stands on the box, and uses the megaphone to speak to SHEELA. Lights dim, except for a spotlight on HEM.)

HEM

(Sarcastically.) If we're going to have more babies to create more generations, and help natural selection do its work, I guess we can kiss Population Zero goodbye! And we can't keep trying to live longer, either. The Earth can't support too many people, so we have to stop making any advances in science that will prolong people's lives.

(HEM turns the megaphone toward the audience.)

More wars! More pestilence! But save the children, so they can be fruitful and multiply! Kiddie porn! Get 'em started early! Send the old folks out on the ice floes! Anybody over 50! They're dead meat anyway.

(Spotlight vanishes and lights come up. HEM gets down from the box and walks back to the table as SHEELA walks to the bowl of ground meat.)

SHEELA

(Sneering.) I got your dead meat!

(SHEELA grabs a handful of raw meat.)

(Rubbing the meat in HEM's face.) All those animals you've killed, just for fun! *(Turning away.)* You arrogant prick!

HEM

(To SHEELA's back.) You wench! We'll see about that.

(SHEELA starts to walk away. HEM grabs SHEELA's arm and turns her around to face him. With his other hand on her neck, he pulls her toward him, pressing his body against hers, holding her in a strong grip.)

There's goddamn sure one way we can find common ground!

(HEM kisses her roughly, heedless of the raw meat on his face. SHEELA pulls free and storms to the door. HEM wipes the meat off his face and flings it to the floor. SHEELA exits.)

(Lights dim to almost black.)

Scene 6.

Lights come up on three podiums, each with a sign on the front with the name of the person standing behind it—DESCARTES, COETZEE, and HEM. Another podium is stage right, facing the other five, with SHEELA behind it. ANNOUNCER stands stage left.

ANNOUNCER

Welcome back for Round 3 of *Who's Your Choice?* Congratulations to our three survivors from Round 2! And a big welcome back to Sheela Nagig, who will choose one of these bachelors to marry and we'll all find out who, tomorrow night. But before we begin, we're going to watch a short video from St. Thomas of Aquinas.

A monitor descends from the ceiling, showing ST. THOMAS.

ST. THOMAS

Now the most necessary use would seem to consist in the fact that animals use plants, and men use animals, for food, and this cannot be done unless these be deprived of life, wherefore it is lawful both to take life from plants for the use of animals, and from animals for the use of men. In fact this is in keeping with the commandment of God himself.

The monitor is pulled upward, out of sight.

ANNOUNCER

Ready to begin with No. 1, Sheela?

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 1, what is it about animals that inspires such contempt?

DESCARTES

There once was a woman named Eve

Who saw what was hard to believe
“The animals aren’t clean
Their habits I’ve seen
They’re nasty and brutish, let’s leave!

The animals deserve what they get
Why help them unless you’re a vet?
They won’t defend or fight
They calmly accept their plight
So we eat them and have no regret!

Sheela, you can’t argue with my philosophy—it’s legendary! That’s why you’ll choose me.

ANNOUNCER

Well, that’s pretty clear! Let’s hear from No. 2 next, Sheela.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 2, why should we care about the way animals are treated?

COETZEE

The question is not whether they can reason, but can they suffer? The part of the brain called the diencephalon is where emotions, feelings, and basic impulses are found. It is well developed in many non-human species, especially mammals and birds. And their senses are more acute than ours because they must be constantly alert to survive in a hostile environment. So you better believe they can suffer!

Goodall has watched chimps sitting and staring at waterfalls. She says it might be “triggered by feelings of awe and wonder. The chimpanzee brain is similar to ours. So why wouldn’t they also have feelings of some kind of spirituality? Which is, really, being amazed at things outside yourself.” And Hobaiter has observed chimps do a kind of ballet, totally silent, and only when there’s a big, thundering downpour, the kind of natural event that seems to inspire awe. They don’t do this at any other time.

ANNOUNCER

We are truly honored. Ludwig Wittgenstein has sent us a video.

A monitor descends from the ceiling, showing LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN.

WITTGENSTEIN

Wenn ein Löwe sprechen konnte, konnten wir ihn nicht verstehen.

ANNOUNCER

If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.

WITTGENSTEIN

Wir können Bewusstseinszustände nicht sinnvoll zu Wesen ohne Sprache zuordnen.

ANNOUNCER

We cannot meaningfully attribute states of consciousness to beings without language.

The monitor is pulled upward, out of sight.

COETZEE

Of course, Wittgenstein doesn't deny that language in its larger sense includes non-human forms of communication. It's what he calls immanent language. Goodall says chimps display this immanent language by an enthusiastic hug, the grasping of hands, or a reassuring pat on the back, and this type of language is important for expressing feelings and emotions.

Sheela, none of the other contestants has shown the sensitivity that I have. That's why you'll choose me.

ANNOUNCER

He certainly makes a point, Sheela. Okay, time for No. 3 to see if he can convince you to choose him, Sheela.

SHEELA

Bachelor No. 3, How can you help me understand your love of hunting?

HEM

You know, you have to truly understand the animal. It's a kind of intimacy, a silent communion with it. I've had that since I was a boy. I became blood brothers with some of the Wakamba on safari. They knew I had this ability. Bears and I have always understood each other. But my bear talk is kinda rusty now—I haven't talked bear talk in a long time. Bears just like me, what can I say? We speak the same lingua.

Choose me, Sheela, and you'll get a real man.

One time I was running up a slope and saw a buck antelope 300 yards away. Just stopped, aimed, and fired in one motion and down it went—one shot! A hell of a good time that was. Africa! That's where the hunting is. I had over a hundred kills in East Africa. Got three lions! The goddamndest fun—what a wild time! I remember the time the boys and I bagged over 400 jackrabbits. That's what we call hares out West—jackrabbits. That day was a real corker! But I never hunt 'em in March. They're a little peculiar in March. The mad March hare, right?

WOMAN-AS-HARE appears at the podium instead of SHEELA. No one notices.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Hare meat is too dark, almost black, hard to digest, and there's way too much blood. It's melancholy meat—causes bad dreams. The meat is very strong and it has a smell people don't like. People say they're bewitched. Or there's something uncanny about them. They are not right. It's unlucky to make a practice of killing hares. Something bad always happens.

ANNOUNCER

That's it for this episode of *Who's Your Choice?* Tune in tomorrow night to see who is Sheela's choice!

(Fade to black.)

Scene 7.

Lights come up on HEM and SHEELA, standing alone, facing each other. A neon sign in bright red is above HEM's head, spelling out, "THE WINNER!" SHEELA and HEM embrace. The neon is extinguished, leaving the stage in almost total blackness. A fog of blue and pink lights comes up center stage on a bar with two bar stools. A coat rack is at the side of the wooden box. Hanging on it are a nun's headdress and a commedia mask with a phallic nose; neither is identifiable. HEM and SHEELA drink whiskey at the bar.

HEM

(Occasionally slurring some words.) My arm and the gun are one, the gun and the antelope are one, the antelope is only killed if it wills it to be so. I am the chosen one, the instrument of its demise, the one who achieves the balance of things, the equalizer who brings two sides into harmony.

SHEELA

(Puts on the nun's headdress.) And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply. He didn't say anything about killing them for trophies.

HEM

God also said man has dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. *(Leering.)* I'd like to make the earth move with you! You're lookin' pretty good to me right now, and I can tell you want me.

SHEELA

Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love. And thou wast exceeding beautiful.

HEM

(Putting on the commedia mask.) Of course, I enjoy the sport of it. Eye-hand coordination, hitting a lion at 200 yards—it's a thrill, I tell you. Like with men and women, it's all about conquest.

SHEELA

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

HEM

Blood lust, yes, that's true.

SHEELA

God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts.

HEM

Men are not afraid of getting dirty, spending days on end tramping through the woods with a group of men, getting wet and muddy if it rains.

SHEELA

And I will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

HEM

(Squirming a bit in his seat, he spreads his legs.) Woo hoo! The hunt! The call of the wild!

(HEM pulls a duck call from his pocket and blows into it— a loud “quacking” sound.)

Jesus! Just talking about killing makes me horny!

SHEELA

Then I beheld, from the appearance of your loins even downward, fire. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.

HEM

(Sneering lewdly at SHEELA.) Woman, you can blow me anytime. Honor my manliness!

SHEELA

(Looking down at HEM's crotch.) Thou hast increased and waxen great. Thou shalt even drink of it and suck it out. Like a roaring lion ravening the prey.

HEM

(Standing up from his bar stool.) Now you're talkin' my lingua! You've never met a mother-sucker like me.

SHEELA

(Standing up from her bar stool and pressing her body against his.) And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth

and the heaven. He openeth my mouth; and in my tongue is the law of kindness. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

HEM

(Grabbing her hair, pulling her head back and down toward his crotch.) Your hair is so long and silky. I want to brush it for you and stroke it. Maybe we should cut it the same length as mine. Would you like that? You can be my girl-boy and I'll be your boy-girl.

SHEELA

(Looking up at him.) Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm. And thou shalt groan, with the groanings of a deadly wounded man.

HEM

(Pounding his glass on the bar, his voice husky.) At last, common ground! More whiskey!

(Blackout. In the film version, a circle of light gets reduced to a pinprick, gradually, until blackout.)

END

[See the following pages for additional dramaturgical information.]

GEORGES-LOUIS LECLERC, COMTE DE BUFFON (1707 – 1788) was a French naturalist, mathematician, cosmologist, and encyclopédiste. His works influenced the next two generations of naturalists. Buffon published thirty-six quarto volumes of his *Histoire Naturelle* (*Natural History*) during his lifetime. —Wikipedia



SHEELA-NA-GIGS are figurative carvings of naked women displaying an exaggerated vulva. They are found all over Europe on cathedrals, castles, and other buildings. Ireland has the greatest number of surviving *sheela na gig* carvings; Joanne McMahon and Jack Roberts cite 101 examples in Ireland. —Wikipedia

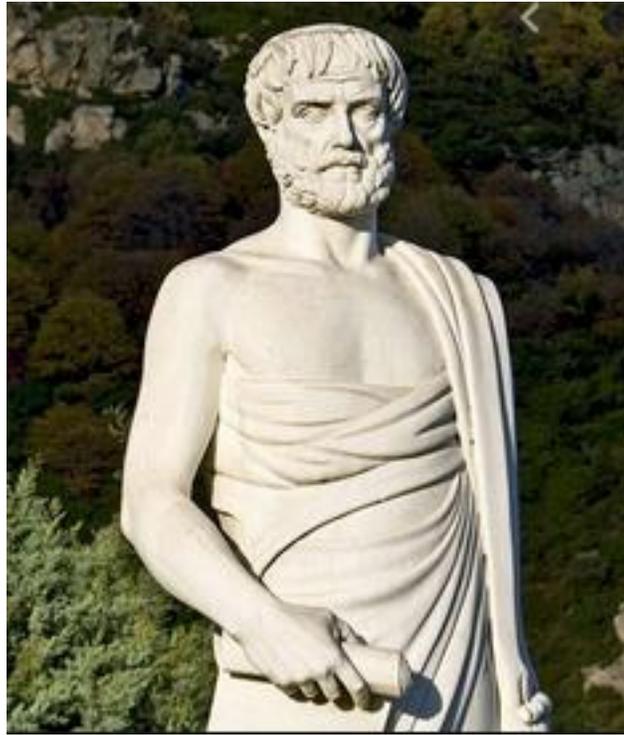


RENÉ DESCARTES (1596 – 1650) was a French-born philosopher, mathematician, and scientist. He is also widely regarded as one of the founders of modern philosophy. Many elements of Descartes's philosophy have precedents in late Aristotelianism. In his theology, he insists on the absolute freedom of God's act of creation. His best known philosophical statement is "*cogito, ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore I am"). —Wikipedia



ARISTOTLE (384 – 322 BC) was a Greek philosopher and polymath during the Classical period in Ancient Greece. Taught by Plato, he was the founder of the Lyceum, the Peripatetic school of philosophy, and the Aristotelian tradition. His writings cover many subjects including physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, theatre, music, rhetoric, psychology, linguistics, economics, politics, meteorology, geology, and government. —Wikipedia

Aristotle is best known, in the context of this play, for his pioneering animal almanac, *Historia Animalium* (*History of Animals*), and his *De Partibus Animalium* (*On the Parts of Animals*).



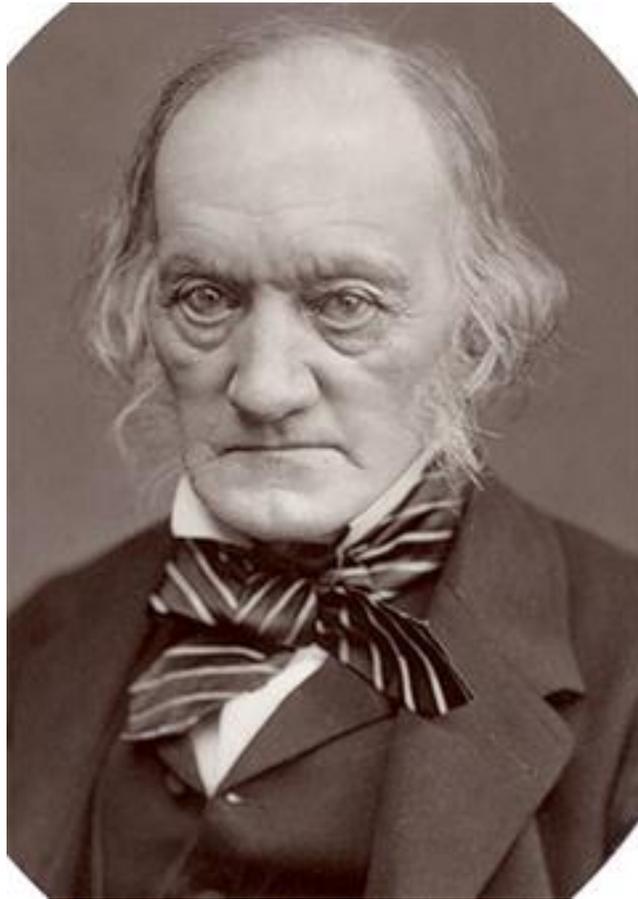
LAZZARO SPALLANZANI (1729 – 1799) was an Italian Catholic priest, biologist, and physiologist who made important contributions to the experimental study of bodily functions, animal reproduction, and animal echolocation. His research on biogenesis paved the way for the downfall of the theory of spontaneous generation, a prevailing idea at the time that organisms develop from inanimate matters. —Wikipedia



SIR RICHARD OWEN (1804 – 1892) was an English biologist, comparative anatomist and paleontologist. Despite being a controversial figure, Owen is generally considered to have been an outstanding naturalist with a remarkable gift for interpreting fossils. An outspoken critic of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, Owen agreed with Darwin that evolution occurred, but thought it was more complex than outlined in Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Owen's approach to evolution can be seen as having anticipated the issues that have gained greater attention with the recent emergence of evolutionary developmental biology. — Wikipedia

Owen was Britain's most celebrated anatomist. He was deeply religious and a strident opposer of Darwin.

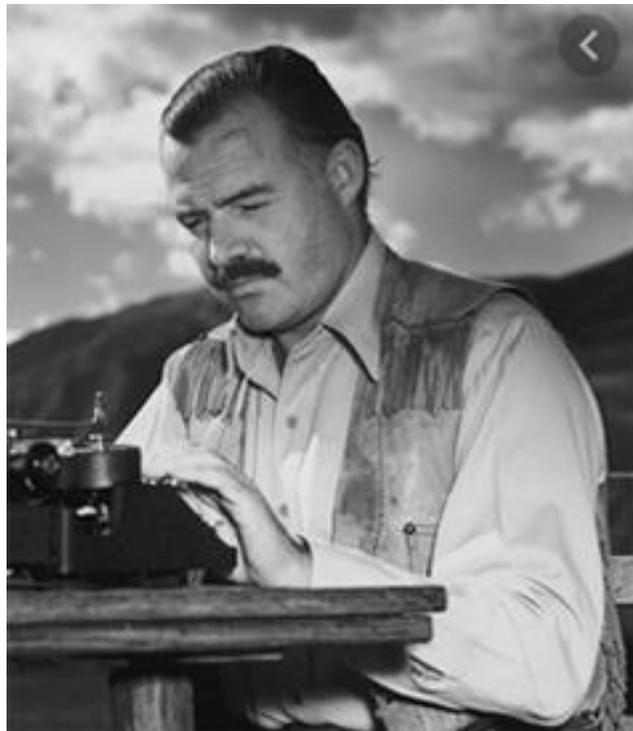


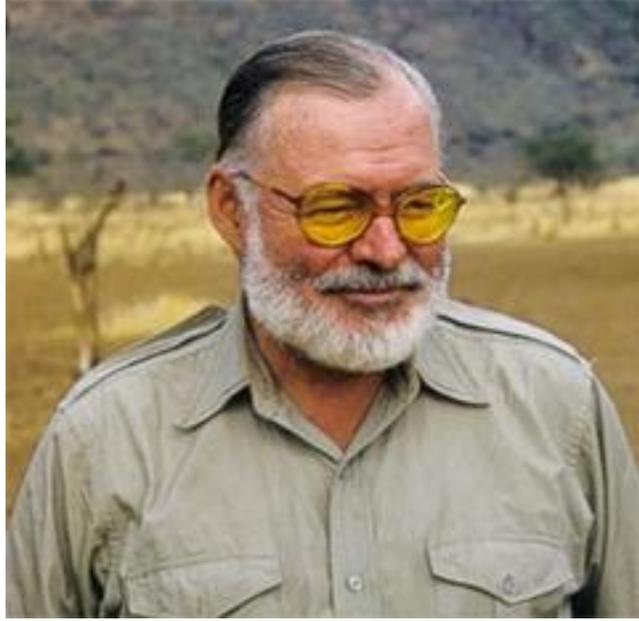


EDWARD TOPSELL (*circa* 1572 – 1625) was an English cleric and author best remembered for his bestiary, *The History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents and Insects* in 1658. An 1100-page treatise on zoology, Topsell's work repeats ancient and fantastic legends about actual animals, as well as reports of mythical animals. Topsell, not a naturalist himself, relied on earlier authorities. —Wikipedia

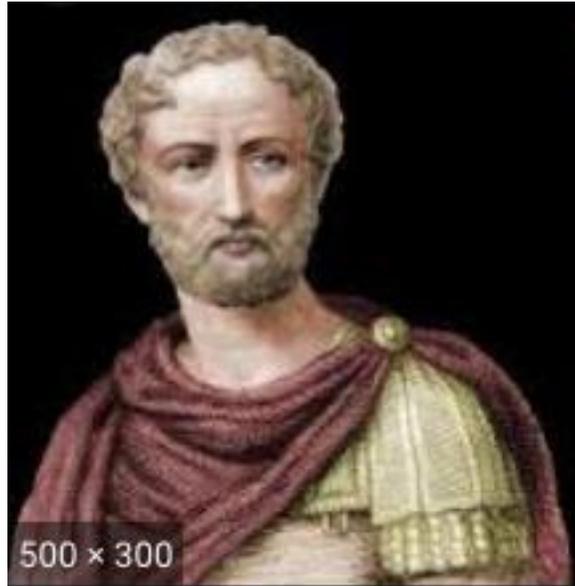
No image of Topsell has been found.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY (1899 – 1961) was an American journalist, novelist, short-story writer, and sportsman. His economical and understated style had a strong influence on 20th-century fiction, while his adventurous lifestyle and his public image brought him admiration from later generations. Hemingway won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. Many of his works are considered classics of American literature. —Wikipedia





PLINY THE ELDER (AD 23/24 – 79) was a Roman author, naturalist, and natural philosopher. He wrote the encyclopedic *Naturalis Historia* (*Natural History*), which became an editorial model for encyclopedias. He spent most of his spare time studying, writing, and investigating natural and geographic phenomena in the field. —Wikipedia



PETER ALBERT DAVID SINGER (born 1946) is an Australian moral philosopher, currently the Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University. He specializes in applied ethics and approaches ethical issues from a secular, utilitarian perspective. He is known in particular for his book *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement* (1975), an important influence in the writing of this play. —Wikipedia

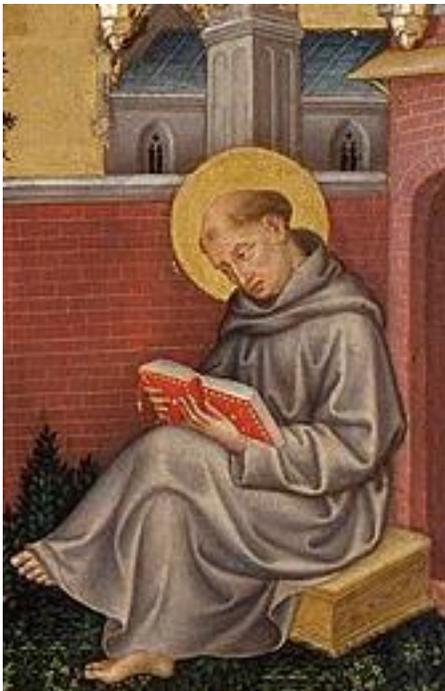


J. M. COETZEE (born 1940) is a South African-born novelist, essayist, linguist, translator, and recipient of the 2005 Nobel Prize in Literature. He is one of the most critically acclaimed and decorated authors in the English language. He has won the Booker Prize (twice), the CAN Prize (thrice), the Jerusalem Prize, the Prix Femina étranger, and *The Irish Times* International Fiction Prize, and holds a number of other awards and honorary doctorates. —Wikipedia

Coetzee's many books include *The Lives of Animals*, an important influence in the writing of this play.

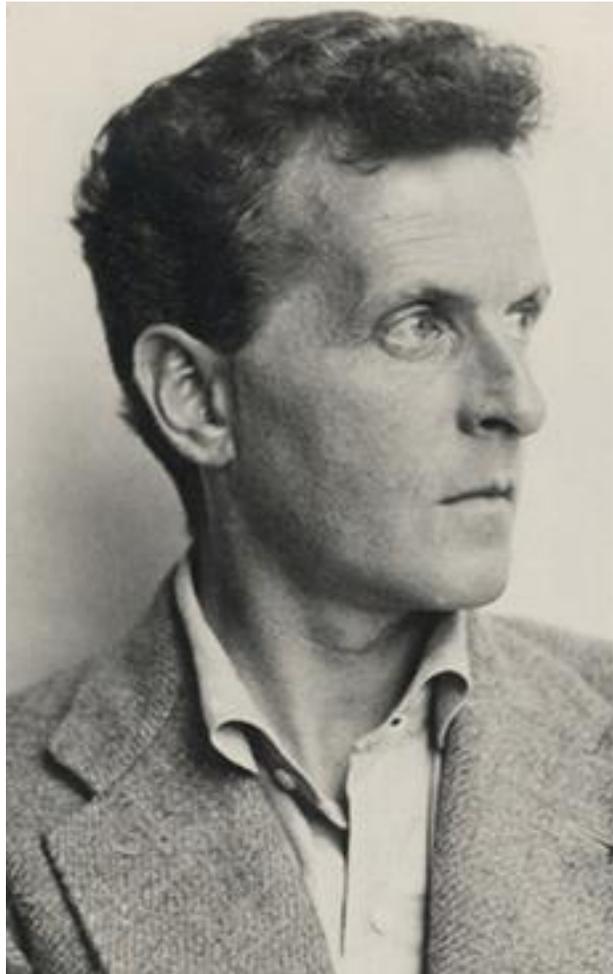
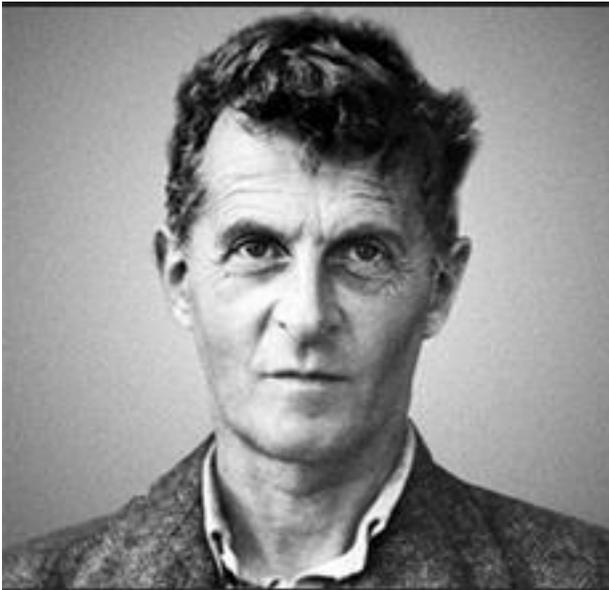


ST. THOMAS of AQUINAS (1225 – 1274) was an Italian Dominican friar, philosopher, Catholic priest, and Doctor of the Church. He was an immensely influential philosopher, theologian, and jurist in the tradition of scholasticism. Among other things, he was a prominent proponent of natural theology and the father of a school of thought (encompassing both theology and philosophy) known as Thomism. He argued that God is the source of both the light of natural reason and the light of faith. His influence on Western thought is considerable, and much of modern philosophy developed or opposed his ideas, particularly in the areas of ethics, natural law, metaphysics, and political theory. Unlike many currents in the Catholic Church of the time, Thomas embraced several ideas put forward by Aristotle—whom he called "the Philosopher"—and attempted to synthesize Aristotelian philosophy with the principles of Christianity. — Wikipedia





LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN (1889 – 1929) was an Austrian-British philosopher who worked primarily in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of language. His *Philosophical Investigations* is recognized as one of the most important works of philosophy in the 20th century. —Wikipedia





Marketplace Butcher Shop



Meat Grinder