

fact, it manifestly is a disease. *Rabies* is bad, but it is not so bad as this disease. Rabies enables a man to do a thing which he could not do when in a healthy state: kill his neighbor with a poisonous bite. No one is the better man for having rabies. The Moral Sense enables a man to do wrong. It enables him to do wrong in a thousand ways. Rabies is an innocent disease, compared to the Moral Sense. No one, then, can be the better man for having the Moral Sense. What, now, do we find the Primal Curse to have been? Plainly what it was in the beginning: the infliction upon man of the Moral Sense; the ability to distinguish good from evil; and with it, necessarily, the ability to do evil; for there can be no evil act without the presence of consciousness of it in the doer of it.

And so I find that we have descended and degenerated, from some far ancestor—some microscopic atom wandering at its pleasure between the mighty horizons of a drop of water perchance—insect by insect, animal by animal, reptile by reptile, down the long highway of smirchless innocence, till we have reached the bottom stage of development—namable as the Human Being. Below us—nothing. Nothing but the Frenchman.

Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. How are Twain's experiments—comparing human behavior to that of animals in various situations—intended to puncture some illusions the human species has about itself? In what way do each of Twain's experiments reveal that other animals are superior to humans?
2. How is the method Twain uses to organize his discussion well suited to highlight important differences between animals and humans?
3. How do Twain's experiments provide an ironic commentary on the interpretation of Darwin's thesis that places humans at the apex of all other species?

Gunjan Sinha

Gunjan Sinha was born in Bihar, India, but grew up in Brooklyn, New York. She earned a graduate degree in molecular genetics from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, and received a degree from New York University's Science and Environmental Reporting Program in 1996. She was life sciences editor for Popular Science for five years and in 2000 was awarded the Ray Bruner Science Writing Award. In the following essay, written in 2002, Sinha explores the mating behavior of the common prairie vole (a mouselike rodent, about seven inches long with a two-inch tail) and what it reveals about the human pattern of monogamy.

YOU DIRTY VOLE

George is a typical Midwestern American male in the prime of his life, with an attractive spouse named Martha. George is a devoted husband, Martha an attentive wife. The couple has four young children, a typical home in a lovely valley full of corn and

kept
Lower
animals
from
way
merely
usually
picks
wrong
acc. to
Twain