

ments as well as adapt to them. Until Adam and Eve's decision, the only environmental engineer on planet Earth was God. Or to put the point in the jargon of my discipline, God had granted to living things the power to react but retained for Himself the power to initiate. Pine trees, toads, roses, and cats were an integral part of nature but they, like all living things, were powerless either to add to or to take away from the rest of nature. The decision of our ancestors to become a culture-creating animal changed all of this. Now the planet's biogram contained one species that could add things to the rest of nature as well as adapt to it.

This decision to challenge God's monopoly of the creation business had a profound and far-reaching impact, as well you know. God expelled us from our ancestral home and placed at the gate of the Garden a flaming sword that turns in all directions. Thus, as a species we human beings are forever banned from experiencing nature as the rest of nature experiences itself.



To illustrate what I mean, let me compare the sex life of two organisms. One is me and the other is our family cat, Hunter. Comparing ourselves to plant life, Hunter and I have a good deal in common by virtue of our shared memberships. We both are animals. He is a vertebrate and so am I. I am a mammal and so is he, and we are both males. Moreover, we have similar tastes. Hunter likes female cats. I like female human beings. But our respective ways of relating to females are quite different. By virtue of the fact that his species never elected to go into the culture-making business, Hunter can relate to female cats simply as females. In contrast, by virtue of the fact that my

What is culture?

Culture, is a human-made environment.

Where do you find culture?

Culture is found at points of interaction between people and people, people and other living things, and people and their physical environment.

What do you see when you see culture?

Technologies, social institutions, languages, beliefs.

species did go into the business of making culture, there is no possible way (even in fantasy) that I can relate to female human beings simply as females.

Intervening between me and every female is the flaming sword God placed at the gate of the Garden. This sword is an environment of human creation which controls, structures, and in countless ways mediates our interactions. Among the various elements making up this mediating environment are institutionally-defined roles such as husband and wife, lover and mistress, prostitute and trick, rapist and victim, old man and young girl, intimate friends and casual acquaintances. Also, that environment contains a myriad of beliefs in the form of images, values, and attitudes. These beliefs serve to make some things right and other things wrong; some things attractive and other things unattractive; some things, socially forbidden and other things, socially mandatory.

Interacting with social institutions and beliefs is a set of complex languages through which females and I transmit information to one another, distribute rewards and punishments, and control the actions and feelings of one another. Needless to say, Hunter and the females in his life also communicate, but as far as I can see the repertoire of languages available to him is much more limited than mine. I can tell a woman, "I love you," through a variety of languages

that make differentiated and complex use of sounds, sights, touch, smells, and taste. This, of course, does not make me superior to Hunter, only different. Human languages, like the rest of culture, are a curse as often as they are a blessing. In many ways Hunter is better off than I; for one thing, he can tell and be told fewer pain-inducing lies.

Finally, the crust of culture mediating between me and female human beings contains an array of tools. Mentally inventory the range of tools that can come into play during the biologically simple act of intercourse: beds, lights, pills, diaphragms, condoms, perfumes, mirrors, and cars as movable boudoirs. These are but a few of the many bits and pieces of technology that help to transmute a simple biological act into an event in cultural history.

This sojourn into comparative sexology was intended to illustrate a general point, so I will now drop the illustration and take up the generalization. As noted previously, surrounding and sustaining every organism—whether it be a geranium, a prairie dog, a plankton, or a human being—is a three-dimensional natural environment. One dimension we call an organism's social environment. This consists of other members of the organism's own species. Thus, other human beings comprise my social environment, other cats Hunter's social environment, and other pine trees the social environment of a pine tree.