

What is the Law?

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 10 Aug 1997

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m.driussi — 10 Aug 1997, 21:38

Reply: Item #0239562 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET01#

alga,

I understand what you are saying re: dietary taboos being modifications rather than radical vegetarianism. (And it is true, he never says, "Enjoy your meat while you can, 'cause next year you're all eating soy-kibble." <g>) But just for fun, let me point out that this assumption relies entirely upon the belief that the beastmen are more (if not entirely) "beast" than "human." That is to say, their habits are derived from biological hardware ("animal") rather than cultural software ("human").

After all, the central tension in Dr. Moreau is the Law: Not to Eat Meat. Not necessarily because Wells was a socialist vegetarian--but because the beastmen are evolving (or being evolved) and therefore do not =need= to eat meat to survive; that is, the biological imperative has been modified by "civilization" and it remains to be seen whether the beastmen, collectively or individually, can resist the temptation to resort/relax into "bestial" behavior.

Again, in "Tracking Song" we aren't entirely sure what these tribes are--they ain't exactly entirely human, but they seem a bit more sophisticated (e.g., spoken language) than animals, unless this angle is total hallucination on the part of our Mr. Magoo/St. Francis.

The issue is further clouded by the ice age setting--in such harsh climates, even omnivorous humans tend to derive a larger percentage of their calories from eating meat (i.e., tend towards carnivorous diet), given the relative absence of vegetable matter. So even if the tribes were 100% human, that is to say capable of surviving on a radically different diet, they would likely be following the strategies of arctic animals, yet they would also be guaranteed of being physically able to make the dietary transition; but if they really are animals, adapted/evolved to arctic conditions, and the arctic is going to be erased quite suddenly, there is a real threat of extinction. (Well, maybe not--going from harsh to mild only means that the polar fat layer is uncomfortable, but still . . . are there tropical penguins? Colors like a cockatoo, I suppose. <g>)

So what is the attitude of the sleighers towards the tribes? Zoo keepers? Naturalists? Bureaucrats of Indian Affairs? Anthropologists?

Re: the blood sacrifices performed by Silk and Severian. True and good point. But both of them learn to stop performing blood sacrifice--the Outsider tells Silk, and Severian disbands the guild.

=mantis=

Jim Jordan — 10 Aug 1997, 22:56 · follows m.driussi

Mantis writes:

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The Law is also present in "Tracking Song," but each group has its own laws, law being indispensable to civilization. A more sophisticated treatment. Also, we might make a list of these laws, and see if any or all of them are due to change with the coming of warmth - a transition from law to grace?

Nutria