

The Logicians Refuted

Jonathan Swift

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LOGICIANS have but ill defined
As rational, the human kind;
Reason, they say, belongs to man,
But let them prove it, if they can.
Wise Aristotle and Smiglesius,
By ratiocinations specious,
Have strove to prove with great precision,
With definition and division,
HOMO EST RATIONE PRAEDITUM;
But, for my soul, I cannot credit 'em.
And must, in spite of them, maintain
That man and all his ways are vain;
And that this boasted lord of nature
Is both a weak and erring creature.
That instinct is a surer guide
Than reason—boasting mortals pride;
And, that brute beasts are far before 'em,
DEUS EST ANIMA BRUTORUM.
Whoever knew an honest brute,
At law his neighbour prosecute,
Bring action for assault and battery,
Or friend beguile with lies and flattery?
O'er plains they ramble unconfined,
No politics disturb their mind;
They eat their meals, and take their sport,
Nor know who's in or out at court.
They never to the levee go
To treat as dearest friend a foe;
They never importune his grace,
Nor ever cringe to men in place;
Nor undertake a dirty job,
Nor draw the quill to write for Bob.
Fraught with invective they ne'er go
To folks at Paternoster Row:
No judges, fiddlers, dancing—masters,
No pickpockets, or poetasters
Are known to honest quadrupeds:
No single brute his fellows leads.
Brutes never meet in bloody fray,

Nor cut each others' throats for pay.
Of beasts, it is confessed, the ape
Comes nearest us in human shape;
Like man, he imitates each fashion,
And malice is his ruling passion:
But, both in malice and grimaces,
A courtier any ape surpasses.
Behold him humbly cringing wait
Upon the minister of state;
View him, soon after, to inferiors
Aping the conduct of superiors:
He promises, with equal air,
And to perform takes equal care.
He, in his turn, finds imitators,
At court the porters, lacqueys, waiters
Their masters' manners still contract,
And footmen, lords, and dukes can act.
Thus, at the court, both great and small
Behave alike, for all ape all.