

Instinct

We spoke in a former lecture on the instinct of birds, and in our last on the instinct of insects. An instinct is a propensity prior to experience and independent of instruction. Paley — The instinct of the Elephant has induced some to give him the epithet of the half reasoning elephant. It is nearly as remarkable in the Dog; but of brute animals the Beaver exhibits powers and faculties, that confound all our reasonings. The labors of the beavers are of a different nature from those of the Bees. They seem endowed with a kind of understanding, which seems to place them between man & any other animals. Our first impressions would induce us to conclude that they reasoned and reflected like man.

Does not the doctrine of innate ideas, w.^{ch} formerly had so many partisans as applicable to man, before the days of Mr Locke, applicable to the brute creation? The brute at, or very soon after its birth, is what he will be remain to be during its whole life. The young Bees work as regularly as the most experienced: its first essays are without hesitation or mistake. May not their brains & nervous system ^{be} constructed on determinate relations to these ideas. But we observe regular operations in some insects that confounds all our theories, especially what relates to their transformation. They cannot be supposed to foresee events, and yet they act as if they did — (See crystals &c) It w.^d perhaps be rather

What is that principle w^c conducts such diminutive creatures in the execution of such wonderful art, as we see in the Bee-hive, the Wasp-nest & even in the web of the Spider? You say that "Nature" instructs and guides them in all these wonders of art, which we so much admire! — But what you mean by this Nature? Examine it more narrowly & you will find it a mere word, w^c diverts people from the close consideration of the point. — If by Nature is meant the energy of God as seen in the various productions that replenish & adorn the world, we have no objection to the term. But Nature considered as an universal second cause, supersedes further enquiry, & as a mere non entity requires of us neither fear nor reverence. This term Nature is the refuge of the slothful mind, in which all absurdities are consistent, and conveys no clear idea, and of course can give no solid satisfaction to the real philosopher. In a word, it is the Deity of the Atheists.

There were those among the ancients who believed that all w^c we see around to be the Deity, or connected with him in the same manner the h. body is with its soul,

There were others who endeavoured to account for the generation of the whole system of visible nature and its reduction to its present form, regularity & beauty, by principles merely mechanical, without having recourse to any assistance from a Divine power. This system w^{ch} excludes a Deity, has been revived in our day in France. a junto of learned men produced a work entitled System de la Nature, written with a view to exclude Deity & destroy the belief of a future state; the principal writer was Morabean.

Instead of adducing any reasonings of the clergy, we shall repeat to you some of the arguments ^{used by} ~~of the~~ celebrated Voltaire in his spirited and masterly confutation of this deistical work; for what advantage are all our studies, if, after many years application, we are left in doubt, whether what we see around us, be the production of blind chance, or the work of an infinitely wise & benevolent Deity.

