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What is Man?

Man is one of many members of the kingdom Animalia, of the phylum Chordata, of the class Mammalia, and even of the order of Primates; however, there is more to man. We are *Homo sapiens*—thinking men. Our ability to think, indeed our predisposition to spend much of our time doing so, is what sets man apart from all of the other creatures that bloomed from the primordial oceans of this planet. Other animals may have some reasoning ability; however, none of them share the sense of wonderment and awe that set us apart from all other life.

Men are not content to spend their days hunting and gathering. Instead men were given a gift—an insatiable appetite for knowledge. We are perpetually gazing into the unknown—whether that be the land over the next hill, the abyss beneath the surface of the ocean, or the air and the vast expanse of space above our heads. Man is also inward searching; we always seek to know our inner self and find our place in life. Man always seeks to go farther than those who came before us. There is no taboo to great: wherever there is to go, whatever there is to discover, whatever there is to try some man will do it.

All other animals stay where the environment best suits their needs; however, man voyages outward, and where the environment does not

suits mans needs, man shapes the environment to be more hospitable. Man has neither wings nor flippers, but as is as at home in the air or beneath the water as he is with two feet on the ground. Man builds shelter to keep dry, invents heating to stay warm where it is too cold to survive, invents cooling to be more productive in hot weather, and bottles air so that he may travel to places in which there is no air. Even the Earth itself is too small to contain men. We venture outward again: to Earth orbit, to the Moon, and someday—no doubt—man will venture away from our beloved Sun and be at home around distant stars.

Men are also gifted in another way. Men are gifted in their ability to communicate. Though other animals may communicate amongst each other, man has developed complex languages not only to discuss the concrete but also for describing the abstract. Man also possesses ability given to no other creature: the ability of written communication. Indeed, writing may be our most important gift, for not only does it allow for contemporary correspondence writing preserves our thoughts and feelings for posterity.

Writing facilitates the exchange of knowledge. Those men who venture into the unknown write down their experiences. These experiences can then quickly be shared with countless others. One man's writings may help another man answer a question. Then the second man is able to ponder even greater mysteries. When the second man finds an answer he may then write down the answer to share it with others. Another man may then read this solution and postulate questions to ask of the new answer that neither

the first nor the second man ever dreamed. Thus, the knowledge of man increases exponentially through writing.

Through writing history is shared. Though men who lived hundreds or thousands of years ago are not around to tell us of what went on then we can readily read of their history. We can learn from their mistakes and their successes. No other animal on Earth has the luxury of written history. Knowledge of history gives man another advantage: the ability to look into the future. By knowing of the past we can see how what we do to do can affect the future.

Through our never ending quest to explain the unknown and the ability to record what we discover man will continue to increase his knowledge and further distance himself from the other animals with which we share this planet Earth.