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## **Dialogue Between A Savage and A Bachelor of Arts**

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#### DIALOGUE BETWEEN A SAVAGE AND A BACHELOR OF ARTS

A governor of Cayenne, having brought over with him a savage from Guiana, who had a great share of good natural understanding, and spoke French tolerably well; a bachelor of arts at Paris had the honor of entering into the following conversation with him:

Bachelor.—I suppose, Mr. Savage, you have seen a number of your country people who pass their lives all alone, for it is said that this is the true way of living natural to man, and that society is only an artificial depravity?

Savage.—Indeed I never did see any of those people you speak of. Man appears to me to be born for society, as well as several other species of

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animals. Each species follows the dictates of its nature; as for us, we live all together in a community.

Bachelor.—How! in community? Why, then, you have fine towns, and cities with walls, and kings who keep a court. You have shows, convents, universities, libraries, and taverns, have you?

Savage.—No; but have I not frequently heard it said that in your continent you have Arabians and Scythians who never knew anything of these matters, and yet form considerable nations? Now we live like these people; neighboring families assist each other. We inhabit a warm climate, and so have very few necessities; we can easily procure ourselves food; we marry; we get children; we bring them up, and then we die. You see this is just the same as among you; some few ceremonies excepted.

Bachelor.—Why, my good sir, then you are not a savage?

Savage.—I do not know what you mean by that word.

Bachelor.—Nor, to tell you the truth, do I myself—stay—let me consider a little—Oh!—a savage? —Why—a savage is—what we call a savage, is a man of a morose, unsociable disposition, who flies all company.

Savage.—I have told you already that we live together in families.

Bachelor.—We also give the name of savage to those beasts who are not tamed, but roam wild about the forests; and from hence we have transferred that appellation to men who inhabit the woods.

Savage.—I go into the woods sometimes, as well as you do, to hunt.

Bachelor.—Pray, now, do you think sometimes?

Savage.—It is impossible to be without some sort of ideas.

Bachelor.—I have a great curiosity to know what your ideas are. What think you of man?

Savage.—Think of him! Why, that he is a twofooted animal, who has the faculty of reasoning, speaking, and who uses his hands much more dexterously than the monkey. I have seen several kinds of men, some white, like you, others copper-colored, like me, and others black, like those that wait upon the governor of Cayenne. You have a beard, we have none; the negroes have wool, you and I have hair. They say, that in your more northerly climates the inhabitants have white hair, whereas that of the Americans is black. This is all I know about man.

Bachelor.—But your soul, my dear sir? your soul? what notion have you of that? whence comes it? what is it? what does it do? how does it act? where does it go?

Savage.—I know nothing about all this, indeed; for I never saw the soul.

Bachelor.—Apropos; do you think that brutes are machines?

Savage.—They appear to me to be organized machines, that have sentiment and memory.

Bachelor.—Well; and pray now, Mr. Savage, what do you think that you, you yourself, I say, possess above those brutes?

Savage.—The gifts of an infinitely superior memory, a much greater share of ideas, and, as I have already told you, a tongue capable of forming many more sounds than those of brutes; with hands more ready at executing; and the faculty of laughing, which a long-winded

argumentator always makes me exercise.

Bachelor.—But tell me, if you please, how came you by all this? What is the nature of your mind? How does your soul animate your body? Do you always think? Is your will free?

Savage.—Here are a great number of questions; you ask me how I came to possess what God has given to man? You might as well ask me how I was born? For certainly, since I am born a man, I must possess the things that constitute a man in the same manner as a tree has its bark, roots, and leaves. You would have me to know what is the nature of my mind. I did not give it to myself, and therefore I cannot know what it is; and as to how my soul animates my body, I am as much a stranger to that, too; and, in my opinion, you must first have seen the springs that put your watch in motion before you can tell how it shows the hour. You ask me if I always think? No, for sometimes I have half-formed ideas, in the same manner as I see objects at a distance, confusedly; sometimes my ideas are much stronger, as I can distinguish an object better when it is nearer to me; sometimes I have no ideas at all, as when I shut my eyes I can see nothing. Lastly, you ask me, if my will is free? Here I do not understand you; these are things with which you are perfectly well acquainted, no doubt, therefore I shall be glad you will explain them to me.

Bachelor.—Yes, yes, I have studied all these matters thoroughly; I could talk to you about them for a month together without ceasing, in such a manner as would surpass your understanding. But tell me, do you know good and evil, right and wrong? Do you know which is the best form of government? which the best worship? what is the law of nations? the common law? the civil law? the canon law? Do you know the names of the first man and woman who peopled America? Do you know the reason why

rain falls into the sea; and why you have no beard?

Savage.—Upon my word, sir, you take rather too great advantage of the confession I made just now, that man has a superior memory to the brutes; for I can hardly recollect the many questions you have asked me; you talk of good and evil, right and wrong; now, I think that whatever gives you pleasure, and does injury to no one, is very good and very right; that what injures our fellow-creatures, and gives us no pleasure, is abominable; and what gives us pleasure but, at the same time, hurts others, may be good with respect to us for the time, but it is in itself both dangerous to us, and very wrong in regard to others.

Bachelor.—And do you live in society with these maxims?

Savage.—Yes, with our relatives and neighbors, and, without much pain or vexation, we quietly attain our hundredth year; some indeed reach to a hundred and twenty, after which our bodies serve to fertilize the earth that has nourished us.

Bachelor.—You seem to me to have a clear understanding, I would very fain puzzle it. Let us dine together, after which we will philosophize methodically.

Savage.—I find that I have swallowed foods that are not made for me, notwithstanding I have a good stomach; you have made me eat after my stomach was satisfied, and drink when I was no longer dry. My legs are not so firm under me as they were before dinner; my head feels heavy, and my ideas are confused. I never felt this diminution of my faculties in my own country. For my part, I think the more a man puts into his body here, the more he takes away from his understanding. Pray, tell me, what is the reason of all this damage and disorder?

Bachelor.—I will tell you. In the first place, as to what passes in your legs, I know nothing about the matter, you must consult the physicians about that; they will satisfy you in a trice. But I am perfectly well acquainted with how things go in your head. You must know, then, that the soul being confined to no place, has fixed her seat either in the pineal gland, or callous body in the middle of the brain. The animal spirits that rise from the stomach

fly up to the soul, which they cannot affect, they beVol. 4—8

ing matter and it immaterial. Now, as neither can act upon the other, therefore the soul takes their impression, and, as it is a simple principle, and consequently subject to no change, therefore it suffers a change, and becomes heavy and dull when we eat too much; and this is the reason that so many great men sleep after dinner.

Savage.—What you tell me appears very ingenious and profound, but I should take it as a favor if you would explain it to me in such a manner as I might comprehend.

Bachelor.—Why, I have told you everything that can be said upon this weighty affair; but, to satisfy you, I will be a little more explicit. Let us go step by step. First, then, do you know that this is the best of all possible worlds?

Savage.—How! is it impossible for the Infinite Being to create anything better than what we now see?

Bachelor.—Undoubtedly; for nothing can be better than what we see. It is true, indeed, that mankind rob and murder each other, but they all the while extol equity and moderation. Several years ago they massacred

about twelve millions of your Americans, but then it was to make the rest more reasonable. A famous calculator has proved that from a certain war of Troy, which you know nothing of, to the last war in North America, which you do know something of, there have been killed in pitched battles no less than five hundred and fiftyfive million six hundred and fifty thousand men, without reckoning young children andwomen buried under the ruins of cities and towns which have been set on fire; but this was all for the good of community; four or five thousand dreadful maladies, to which mankind are subject, teach us the true value of health; and the crimes that cover the face of the earth greatly enhance the merit of religious men, of which I am one; you see that everything goes in the best manner possible, at least as to me.

Now things could never be in this state of perfection, if the soul was not placed in the pineal gland. For—but let me take you along with me in the argument. Let us go step by step. What notion have you of laws, and of the rule of right and wrong; of the *to Kalon*, as Plato calls it?

Savage.—Well, but my good sir, while you talk of going step by step, you speak to me of a hundred different things at a time.

Bachelor.—Every one converses in this manner. But tell me who made the laws in your country?

Savage.—The public good.

Bachelor.—That word *public good* means a great deal. We have not any so expressive; pray, in what sense do you understand?

Savage.—I understand by it that those who have a plantation of cocoa trees or maize, have forbidden others to meddle with them, and that

those who had them not, are obliged to work, in order to have a right to eat part of them. Everything that I have seen, either in your country or my own, teaches me that there can be no other spirit of the laws.

Bachelor.—But as to women, Mr. Savage, women?

Savage.—As to women, they please me when they are handsome and sweet-tempered; I prize them even before our cocoa trees; they are a fruit which we are not willing to have plucked by any but ourselves. A man has no more right to take my wife from me than to take my child. However, I have heard it said, that there are people who will suffer this; they have it certainly in their will; every one may do what he pleases with his own property.

Bachelor.—But as to successors, legatees, heirs, and collateral kindred?

Savage.—Every one must have a successor. I can no longer possess my field when I am buried in it, I leave it to my son; if I have two, I divide it equally between them. I hear that among you Europeans, there are several nations where the law gives the whole to the eldest child, and nothing to the younger. It must have been sordid interest that dictated such unequal and ridiculous laws. I suppose either the elder children made it themselves, or their fathers, who were willing they should have the pre-eminence.

Bachelor.—What body of laws appears to you the best?

Savage.—Those in which the interests of mankind, my fellow creatures, have been most consulted.

Bachelor.—And where are such laws to be found?



Savage.—In no place that I have ever heard of.

Bachelor.—You must tell me from whence the inhabitants of your country first came? Who do you think first peopled America?

Savage.—God—whom else should we think?

Bachelor.—That is no answer. I ask you from what country your people first came?

Savage.—The same country from which our trees came; really the Europeans appear to me a very pleasant kind of people, to pretend that we can have nothing without them; we have just as much reason to suppose ourselves your ancestors as you have to imagine yourselves ours.

Bachelor.—You are an obstinate little savage.

Savage.—You a very babbling bachelor.

Bachelor.—But, hark ye, Mr. Savage, one word more with you, if you please. Do you think it right in Guiana to put those to death who are not of the same opinion with yourselves?

Savage.—Undoubtedly, provided you eat them afterwards.

Bachelor.—Now you are joking. What do think of the constitution?

Savage.—Your servant.

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