

TWELVE PHILOSOPHERS ANSWER
HISTORY'S MOST PROFOUND QUESTION:

WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD?



WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID BOTTEN

PLATO: IT WAS EXPELLED FROM MY IDEAL STATE.



ITS ILLIBERAL PERFORMANCES (11) AND THE GROSS DEFORMITIES OF ITS MOVEMENTS WERE SUCH THAT I FOUND IT NECESSARY TO PREVENT IT FROM PRACTISING ITS 'ART' WITHIN OUR STATE LEST THE TASTE OF OUR CITIZENS BE CORRUPTED AND OUR GUARDIANS GROW UP AMID IMAGES OF MORAL DECAY (12).

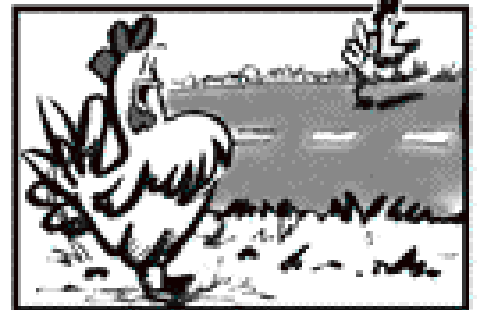


LET IT GO TO SOME NOXIOUS PASTURE AND THERE BROWSE UPON MANY A BANEFUL HERB (12).

ARISTOTLE: IT WAS A TRAGIC ACT OF IMITATION.

LIKE A POET I SHALL DESCRIBE NOT NECESSARILY A THING THAT HAS HAPPENED BUT A KIND OF THING THAT MIGHT BE (38). I SHALL SET FORTH A TRAGIC TALE TO ACCOMPLISH A CATHARSIS OF EMOTIONS (36)

TO BEGIN, ONCE THERE WAS A CHICKEN, AS GOOD AND VIRTUOUS A CHICKEN AS COULD EVER BE FOUND (40). THE CHICKEN ALWAYS BELIEVED, AS IT HAD BEEN TOLD, THAT A CHICKEN COULD NOT CROSS THE ROAD AND LIVE. UNTIL IT WITNESSED ONE DO JUST THAT.



NOW, CHICKENS ARE IMITATIVE CREATURES SO THIS ONE NATURALLY SET OFF ACROSS THE ROAD IN DELIGHTFUL IMITATION OF WHAT IT HAD JUST SEEN (34)



SHE PLUGGED HER EARS AGAINST THE WARNINGS AND PLEAS OF HER FRIENDS AND SUBSEQUENTLY DIDN'T DISCOVER UNTIL SHE WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD THAT A PACK OF SUBURBAN UTILITY VEHICLES WERE BEARING DOWN ON HER AS RUSH HOUR BEGAN. AS A RESULT THERE OCCURED AN ACTION OF A PARTICULARLY PAINFUL AND DESTRUCTIVE NATURE (39). THE END (43)

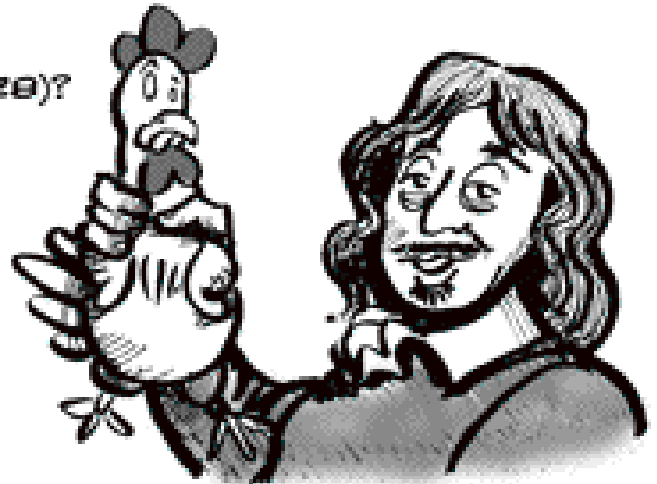


I TRUST I AM ADDRESSING A CULTIVATED AUDIENCE WHO DO NOT REQUIRE HERE THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF A GRAPHIC GESTURE (46).

I'LL BET THAT AROUSED IN YOU SOME FEAR AND PITY HMMMM? (36)

DESCARTES: HOW DO I KNOW THERE IS A CHICKEN?

I KNOW I AM, I THINK (28), BUT HOW DO I KNOW THIS CHICKEN IS NOT SOME DREAM (29)? OR A HALLUCINATION CAUSED BY SOME EVIL GENIUS (29)? IT HAS QUALITIES I CAN PERCEIVE THROUGH THE SENSES. IT IS TEMPTING TO SAY THEREFORE THAT MY SENSES REVEAL THE NATURE OF THIS CHICKEN (34).



BUT IF I PUT IT ON A SPIT AND APPROACH IT TO A FIRE I FIND THAT ITS COLOUR, SHAPE, HARDNESS, PERFUME... IN SHORT, ALL THOSE QUALITIES IN TERMS OF WHICH I MIGHT HAVE SOUGHT TO DESCRIBE IT ... UNDERGO A CHANGE AND IT MAY BECOME QUITE (34)...



DELICIOUS.

AND YET IT IS THE SAME CHICKEN. IT FOLLOWS THEREFORE THAT IT POSSESSES ITS SENSIBLE QUALITIES ONLY ACCIDENTALLY- THEY ARE NOT OF ITS "NATURE" OR "ESSENTIAL" (34)

I CAN KNOW THIS CHICKEN AND WHY IT MIGHT CROSS A ROAD NOT THROUGH EMPIRICAL OBSERVATION, BUT ONLY THROUGH RATIONAL REFLECTION (35).

I THINK

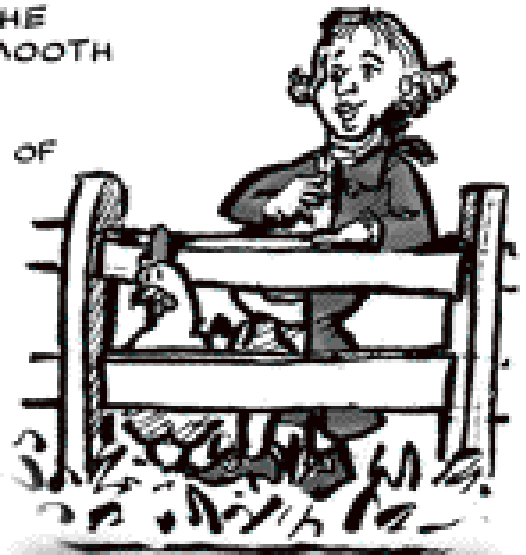
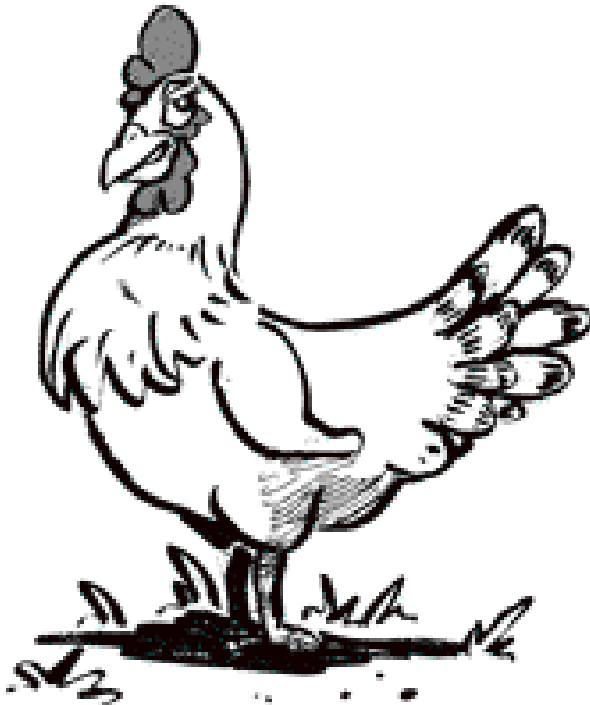
LET ME GET BACK TO YOU ON THAT



BURKE: SHE WAS IN LOVE

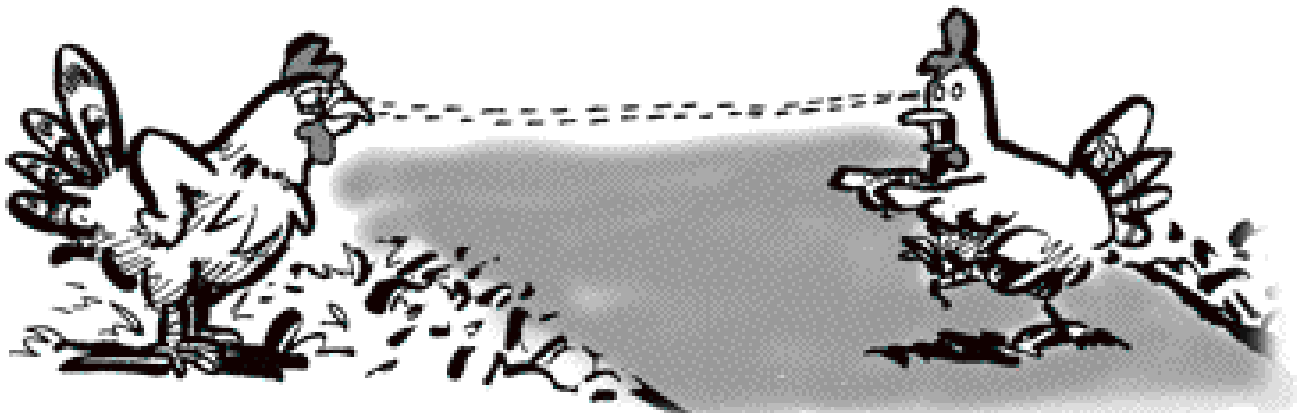
PERHAPS ONE DAY THIS LITTLE RED HEN LOOKED UP FROM HER SCRATCHING AND SAW, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD, ANOTHER CHICKEN: LITTLE, SMOOTH AND APPARENTLY SUBMISSIVE (74).

ITS PERFECT BODY WAS NOT COMPOSED OF ANGULAR PARTS, SO ITS PARTS NEVER CONTINUED LONG IN THE SAME LINE (74).



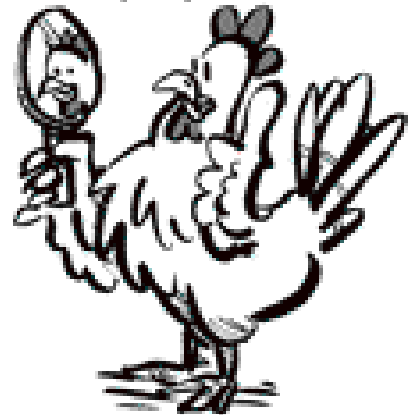
ITS HEAD INCREASED INSENSIBLY TO THE MIDDLE FROM WHENCE IT LESSENERED GRADUALLY UNTIL IT MIXED WITH THE NECK; THE NECK LOST ITSELF IN A LARGER SWELL, WHICH CONTINUED TO THE MIDDLE OF THE BODY, WHEN THE WHOLE DECREASED AGAIN TO THE TAIL (74). IN SHORT, IT WAS BEAUTIFUL.

ITS BEAUTY WAS A QUALITY THAT ACTED MECHANICALLY UPON THE MIND OF THE HEN BY THE INTERVENTION OF THE SENSE OF SIGHT (73). THIS CAUSED LOVE (OR SOME PASSION SIMILAR) TO ARISE IN THE MIND OF THE HEN (73) WHO WAS COMPELLED TO CROSS THE ROAD IN ORDER TO GAIN MORE SATISFACTION FROM CONTEMPLATING SUCH BEAUTY (73).

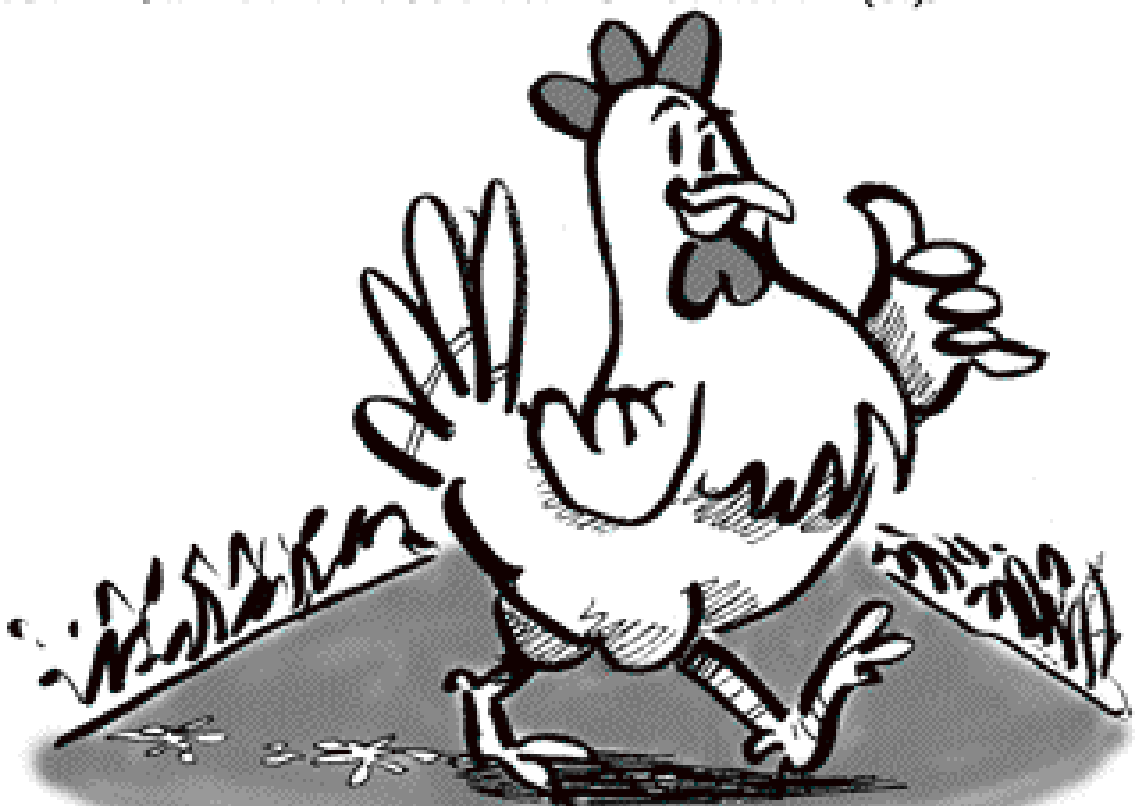


HEGEL: SHE WAS REALIZING HERSELF THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

THIS CHICKEN MUST BE A THINKING CONSCIOUSNESS: THAT IS SHE MAKES EXPLICIT TO HERSELF, BY MEANS OF HER OWN NATURE, WHAT SHE IS AND WHAT THE WORLD IS (80).

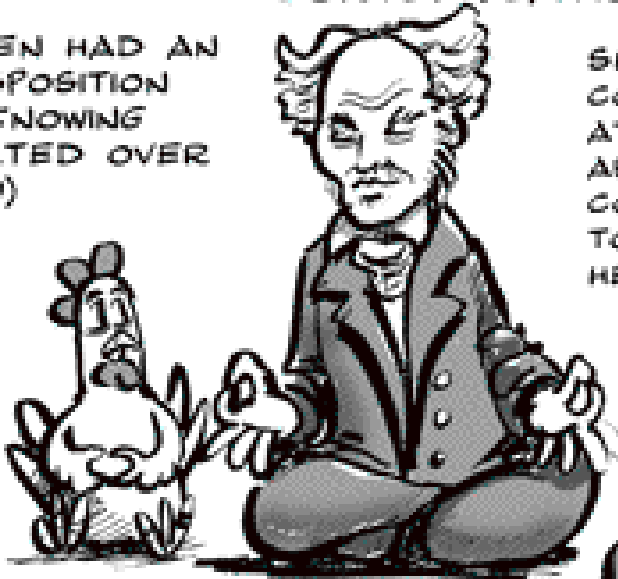


SHE HAD AN IMPULSE TO EXPRESS HERSELF, AND SO AGAIN RECOGNIZE HERSELF, BY PUTTING THE STAMP OF HER OWN INNER NATURE ON THE ROAD AND THUS BREAKDOWN THE STUBBORN INDIFFERENCE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD AND ENJOY IT AS THE EMBODIMENT OF HERSELF (81).

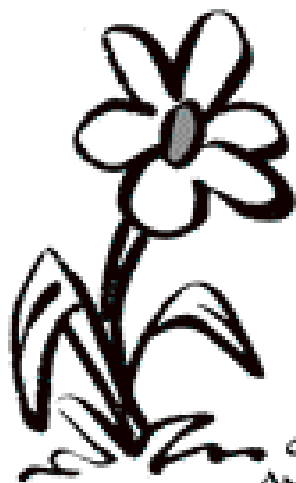


SCHOPENHAUER: SHE HAD LOST HERSELF IN THE CONTEMPLATION OF AN OBJECT.

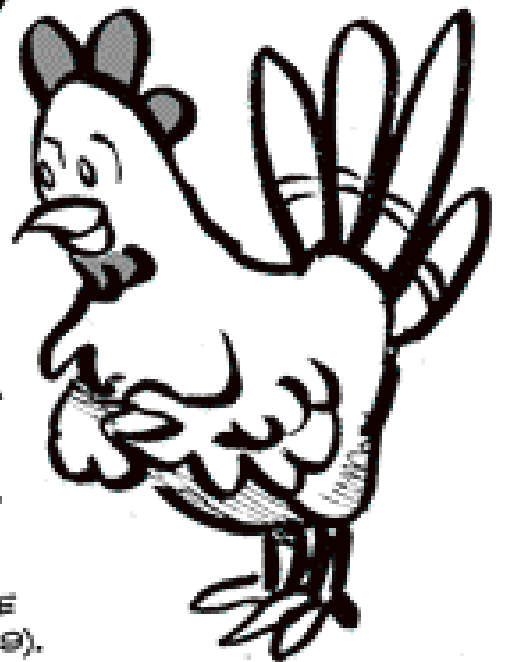
THIS CHICKEN HAD AN INWARD DISPOSITION WHEREBY KNOWING PREDOMINATED OVER WILLING (99)



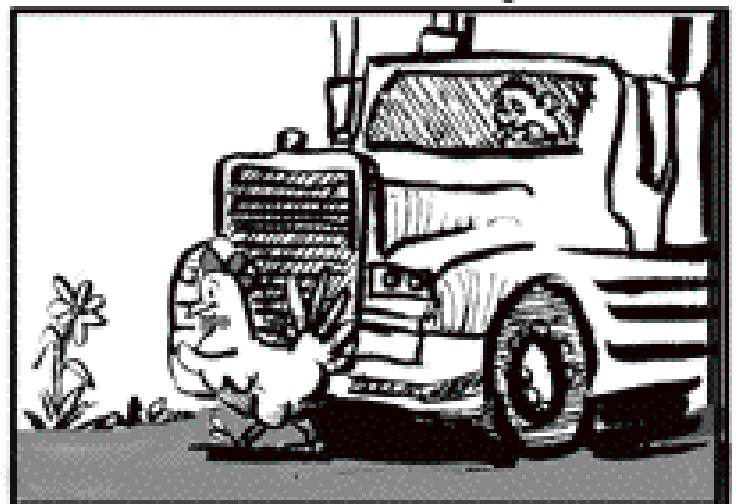
SHE RELINQUISHED THE COMMON WAY OF LOOKING AT THINGS, NOT ALLOWING ABSTRACT THOUGHT, THE CONCEPTS OF THE REASON, TO TAKE POSSESSION OF HER CONSCIOUSNESS (97).



SO IT HAPPENED THAT ONE DAY, UPON OBSERVING A PARTICULARLY STRIKING FLOWER ACROSS THE ROAD, SHE SANK HERSELF IN PERCEPTION, AND LOST HERSELF IN THE OBJECT. IT WAS RAISED TO THE IDEA OF ITS WHOLE SPECIES AND THE CHICKEN BECAME THE PURE SUBJECT OF WILL-LESS KNOWLEDGE. AS SUCH THEY WERE BOTH TAKEN OUT OF THE STREAM OF TIME AND ALL OTHER RELATIONS (99).

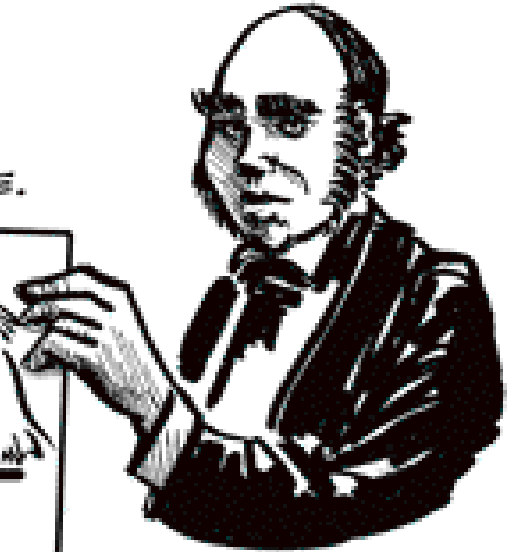
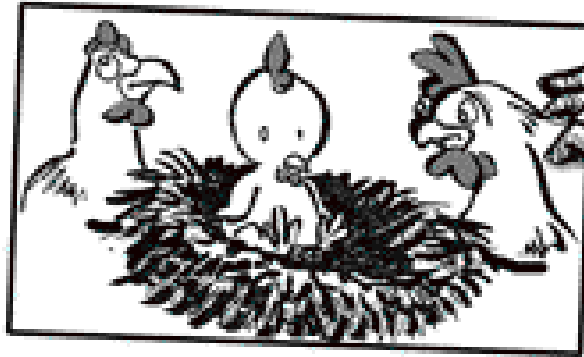


UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE CHICKEN SHE WAS NOT TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY OF AN ONGOING TRUCK AS SHE APPROACHED THE FLOWER AND SHE SOON LOST ALL HER WILL TO LIVE.

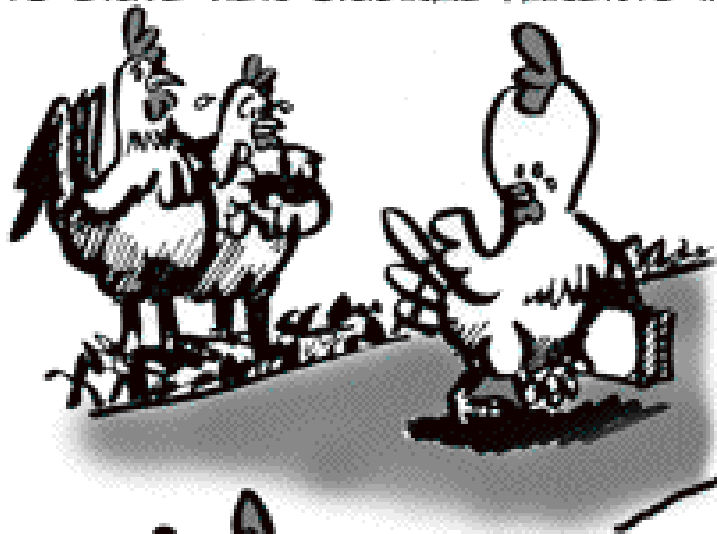


DARWIN: SHE WAS SEEKING HER OWN NICHE
IN THE POLITY OF NATURE TO EXPLOIT

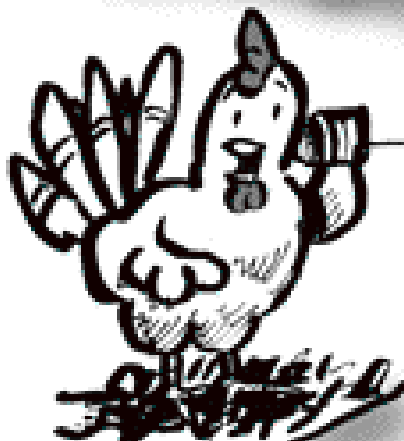
THIS CHICKEN, DUE TO MUTATION,
HAD BEEN BORN SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT
IN HER CONSTITUTION THAN THE
OTHER CHICKENS IN HER BROOD (85),
MORE INTELLIGENT AND COMPASSIONATE.



SHE COULD COMPREHEND THAT TO REMAIN WHERE SHE WAS
WOULD LEAVE HER IN CONSTANT COMPETITION WITH OTHERS
OF HER KIND (101). ALTHOUGH SHE HAD AN ADVANTAGE OVER
THEM IN THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL, SHE HAD NO DESIRE
TO DRIVE HER ORIGINAL PARENTS IN TO EXTINCTION (102)



SHE THEREFORE WALKED
ACROSS THE ROAD
(SHE COULD NOT FLY
BECAUSE, DUE TO A
CHANGE OF HABITS, THE
WINGS OF HER KIND HAD,
THROUGH DISUSE, REDUCED
IN SIZE AND BECOME MERE
RUDIMENTARY ORGANS (112).)



SHE ENTERED INTO A
DISTINCT COUNTRY SO
THAT BOTH SHE
AND HER ORIGINAL
PARENTS COULD
CONTINUE TO EXIST (102)
AND PROPOGATE (74).



NIETZSCHE: SHE WAS SAYING 'YEA' TO HERSELF.

ALL ABOUT HER THE HEN NOTICED THE DECLINE OF HER TYPE AS MORE AND MORE OF HER COMPANIONS WERE TAKEN AWAY FOR 'PROCESSING'. THIS INDUCED IN HER A PROFOUND HATRED (104) WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT A KIND OF ECSTASY THE ESSENTIAL FEATURE OF WHICH WAS THE FEELING OF INCREASED STRENGTH AND ABUNDANCE (102).



IN A DIONYSIAN STATE, HER WHOLE SYSTEM OF PASSIONS STIMULATED AND INTENSIFIED, QUITE UNABLE TO REFRAIN FROM REACTION, SHE DISCHARGED HER EMOTIONS BY PHYSICALLY REPRESENTING EVERYTHING SHE FELT (103).



SHE TORE THROUGH THE WIRE THAT CONFINED HER AND RAN TO FREEDOM ACROSS THE ROAD FOR SHE HAD NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE THAN SAY "YEA" TO HERSELF ALONE IN THIS WAY (103).



MARX: IT WAS A REVOLUTIONARY ACTION AGAINST HER CAPITALIST OPPRESSORS.



THE PROLETARIAN CHICKENS AND THE BOURGEOISE FARMER WERE BOUND TOGETHER IN A RELATION OF PRODUCTION (Y5).



THE FARMER PROVIDED ADEQUATE (IF MEAGER) FOOD AND SHELTER AND A LARGE PROTECTED AREA OUTDOORS WHERE THE CHICKENS COULD RANGE FREE FROM PREDATORS AND SOCIALIZE WITH THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS. IN RETURN THE CHICKENS WERE EXPECTED TO PRODUCE FOR THE FARMER A WEEKLY QUOTA OF EGGS..

IT WAS DEMAISING AND EXPLOITIVE (*181) FOR THE CHICKENS, BUT NOT UNBEARABLE UNTIL A CERTAIN DEVELOPMENT CAME IN THE MATERIAL PRODUCTIVE FORCES OF THEIR SOCIETY (Y5).



WITH A DESIRE TO INCREASE PROFITS FOR HIMSELF(*181) THE GREEDY FARMER BEGAN TO BUILD AN ARRAY OF CAGES IN WHICH HE PLANNED TO CONFINED THE CHICKENS PERMANENTLY IN ORDER TO EXPLOIT THEM MORE EFFICIENTLY.

THE CHICKENS SAW WHAT HE WAS UP TO AND UNDERSTOOD THAT SOON ALIENATION WOULD AFFLICT EVERY INDIVIDUAL CAUGHT IN THE TRAP OF CAPITALIST MODERNIZATION (180). THEY KNEW THAT WITH THIS DEVELOPMENT THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE FARMER WOULD TURN INTO THEIR FETTERS (Y5). THUS BEGAN A SOCIAL REVOLUTION (Y5).



THE BRAVE CHICKENS BROKE FREE FROM THEIR SERVILE STATE AND CROSSED THE ROAD TO THE OTHER SIDE WHERE THEY USHERED IN A COMMUNIST ORDER AND WERE AT LAST FREE TO DEVELOP THEIR FULL CHICKENHOOD (*178).

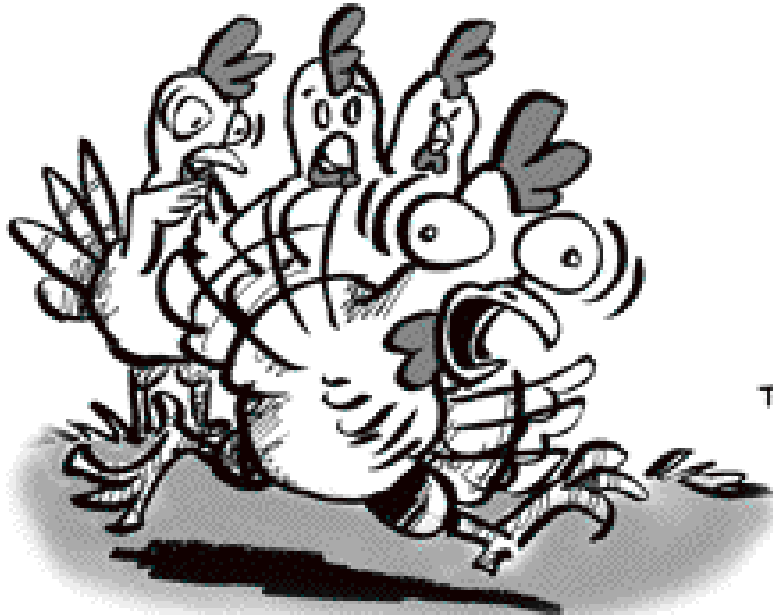
TOLSTOY: SHE WAS EXPRESSING AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE.



THIS CHICKEN HAD THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF WANDERING TOO CLOSE TO THE BARN ONE DAY AND SEEING THE FARM COOK SLAUGHTER ONE OF HER SISTERS. HER INNOCENCE WAS SHATTERED. SHE FELT A HORRIFIED REVULSION TOWARDS THE COOK.



SHE RAN BACK TO HER BROOD DETERMINED TO EXPRESS THE EXPERIENCE TO OTHERS (220).



SHE SPOTTED SOME OF HER FRIENDS AND BY "CERTAIN EXTERNAL SIGNS" (221), (WHICH CONSISTED OF TURNING IN CIRCLES, SHRIEKING AND RUNNING ACROSS THE ROAD), SHE COMMUNICATED HER FEELINGS TO THEM SO THAT THEY WOULD BECOME "INFECTED" AND ALSO EXPERIENCE THEM (22). IT WASN'T PRETTY, BUT ART IS NOT DEFINED BY "REFINEMENT OF TECHNIQUE" (218).

THE AIM OF HER PERFORMANCE WAS CLEAR TO ALL, EVEN THE COOK WHO HAD COME UPON THE SCENE (221).

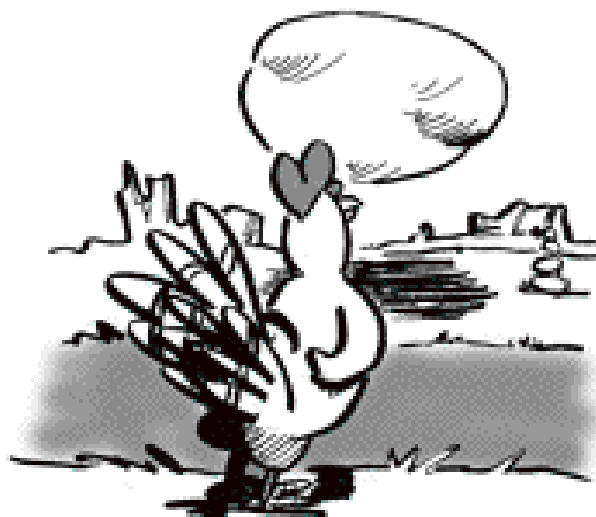
SUCH WAS THE CLARITY OF HER EXPRESSION AND ITS OBVIOUS SINCERITY, THAT THE CHICKENS WHO WITNESSED IT WERE INDEED INFECTED TO A GREAT DEGREE.

THEY DEMONSTRATED THEIR CAPACITY FOR EXPERIENCING THE OTHER'S EMOTION BY FOLLOWING HER ACROSS THE ROAD (220).



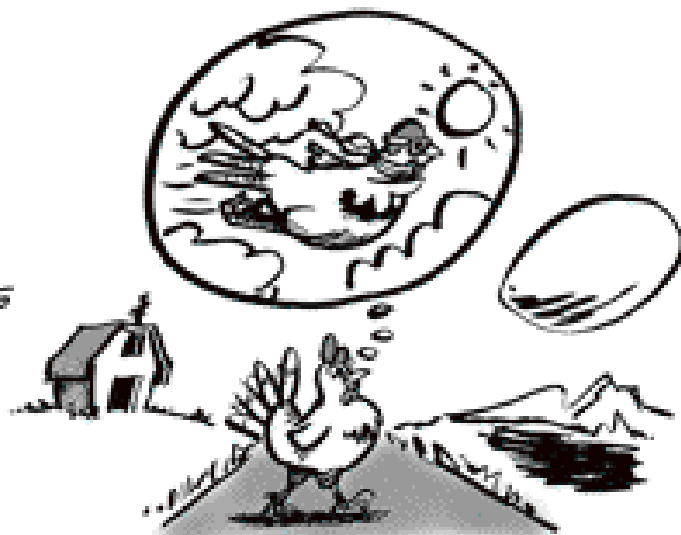
THE COOK LET THEM GO WITHOUT CHASE BECAUSE HE DIDN'T WANT ANY INFECTED CHICKENS ON HIS FARM.

FREUD: IT WAS EXPRESSING AN UNCONCIOUS DESIRE TO RETURN TO THE EGG.

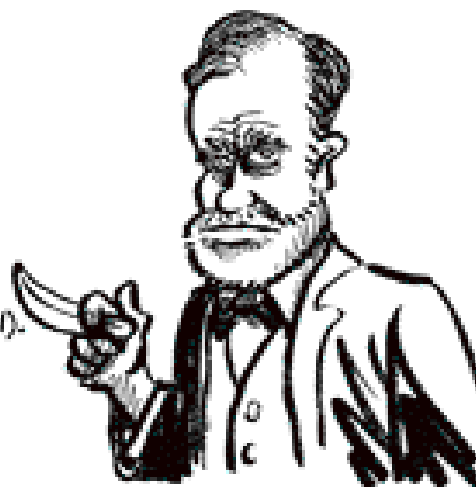


THIS CHICKEN, LIKE SO MANY, WAS UNHAPPY AND DISSATISFIED WITH HER LIFE. SO, AS SHE SPENT HER TIME NECESSANTLY SEEKING FOOD AND SCRATCHING DIRT, DAY-DREAMS OFTEN FILLED HER HEAD (II0). ONE DAY SHE LOOKED UP FROM HER SCRATCHING AND NOTICED AN UNUSUALLY LARGE WHITE CLOUD COVERING MOST OF THE PASTURE ACROSS THE ROAD. THIS ROUSED AN INTENSE DESIRE SHE COULD NOT EXPLAIN.

SHE WANDERED ACROSS THE ROAD, HER HEAD FILLED WITH DAY DREAMS OF GLIDING THROUGH A SEA OF WHITENESS BEFORE A GOLDEN SUN.



LOOKING UP AT THE EXPANSE OF WHITE HAD REMINDED HER OF THE SECURITY AND COMFORT OF HER PRE-HATCH STATE IN THE EGG, A TIME WHEN ALL HER NEEDS WERE MET (III). SHE DESIRED TO RETURN TO THAT STATE BUT THE CHICKEN WOULD BE ASHAMED TO ADMIT SUCH AN INFANTILE DESIRE SO SHE REPRESSED THAT NOTION (III). INSTEAD SHE CREATED A WISH FULFILLING PHANTASY WHICH CARRIED WITH IT TRACES BOTH OF THE SIGHT THAT ENGENDERED IT AND SOME OF THE PAST MEMORY (III).



Works cited (in order of appearance)

- Plato. "The Republic." Contextualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard.
Ed. H.Gene Blocker & Jennifer M. Jeffers. Toronto: Wadsworth, 1999 pp.11-21
- Aristotle. "The Poetics." Contextualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard.
Ed. H.Gene Blocker & Jennifer M. Jeffers. Toronto: Wadsworth, 1999 pp.33-46
- Scruton, Roger. "Rene Descartes." A Short History of Modern Philosophy.
Routledge: 1981, 1995
- Burke, Edmund. "The Sublime and Beautiful." Contextualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard. Ed. H.Gene Blocker & Jennifer M. Jeffers. Toronto: Wadsworth, 1999 pp.66-75
- Kant, Immanuel. "The Critique of Judgement." Contextualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard. Ed. H.Gene Blocker & Jennifer M. Jeffers. Toronto: Wadsworth, 1999 pp.84-90
- Hegel, George W.F. "Aesthetics." Contextualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard.
Ed. H.Gene Blocker & Jennifer M. Jeffers. Toronto: Wadsworth, 1999 pp.90-96
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. "The World as Will and Idea" Contextualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard. Ed. H.Gene Blocker & Jennifer M. Jeffers. Toronto: Wadsworth, 1999 pp.97-102
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Art and the Will to Power." Contextualizing Aesthetics: From Plato to Lyotard. Ed. H.Gene Blocker & Jennifer M. Jeffers. Toronto: Wadsworth, 1999 pp.102-106
- Darwin, Charles. Excerpt from 'On the Origin of Species' (1859). The Darwin Reader.
Ed. Marston Bates & Philip S. Humphrey, 1957
- Marx, Karl. From 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1853) and references marked * are from *The German Ideology*(1846) A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader. Ed. Anthony Easthorpe & Kate McGowan
- "Leo Tolstoy." Key Writers on Art From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century
Ed. Chris Murray. 2003
- Freud, Sigmund. "The Relation of the Poet to Day Dreaming" The Nature of Art: An Anthology. Ed. Thomas E. Wartenberg. 2001