

## Man and Production

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### I PRODUCTION AND LIFE

The clinching characterization of life-bearing structures is that they struggle to feed themselves, to defend themselves and to perpetuate their kinds. All animals from amoebas to humans spend substantial time and effort in obtaining the things they need for food and defence. Whether the animal catches an insect or an antelope, gathers nectar and pollen, builds termitaria, or makes ovens and bakes bread, it is engaged in 'production', if the ordinary term is used in a justified extension. In the case of the human species, however, production has acquired a uniquely distinct form.

Man has been characterized in endless ways: as a political animal, a reasoning animal, a social animal, a tool-using animal, and a tool-making animal,<sup>1</sup> not to mention the quaint and irrelevant ones: a featherless biped,<sup>2</sup> a cooking animal, or a religious animal.<sup>2</sup> They all (even the last ones) fit the human nature to an appreciable degree, but none in a strictly characterizing way with respect to the other animals. To wit, some animals do live in a stratified society controlled by 'elected' leaders. Animals also use raw stones, clubs and twigs as tools in the way the ape-men did and apes still do. Even humans occasionally may use objects as found in the superficial environment. Familiar cases of tool-making animals — that is, of animals that modify raw environmental objects into tools — are the beavers, the bees, and all the nest-making birds. A most remarkable case is the Galapagos woodpecker finch (*Cactospiza pallidus*), which cuts a cactus

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, I.2; Seneca, *Epistles*, 41.8; Spinoza, *Ethics*, IV.35; Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, I.5; Benjamin Franklin, as reported by James Boswell (1922, p. 28 n.).

<sup>2</sup> Boswell (1922); Plato, *Statesman*, 266; Quatrefages (1890, ch. 35); and Plato, *Laws*, X, 902.