

Kant believed that humans comprise two distinct forms of being, one “animal” and the other “rational”. He maintains that the latter has value where the former has none.

In this excerpt from a biography of Wittgenstein, we encounter an expression of this idea, perhaps, in Wittgenstein’s experiences as a soldier in the First World War.

Yesterday I was shot at. I was scared! I was afraid of death. I now have such a desire to live. And it is difficult to give up life when one enjoys it. This is precisely what ‘sin’ is, the unreasoning life, a false view of life. From time to time I become an *animal*. Then I can think of nothing but eating, drinking and sleeping. Terrible! And then I suffer like an animal too, without the possibility of internal salvation. I am then at the mercy of my appetites and aversions. Then an authentic life is unthinkable.

- Wittgenstein. Ray Monk. Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius. New York: Penguin Books, 1991. p. 146.

Consider whether Wittgenstein’s experience as an “animal”, as opposed to what he calls an “authentic” life, exemplifies Kant’s thinking. Wittgenstein’s thoughts also bear comparison with the Biblical concept of the human fall from grace.