

CONFERENCE 2007 LONDON AND MANCHESTER
ETHICS - THE ENVIRONMENT AND ANIMALS
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Animals: fewer species, loss of natural habitats, use in research, in testing cosmetics, hunting, genetic manipulation, as food for humans

II EXTRINSIC VALUE - Utilitarian value as a means to an end

Environment:

- 'Shallow ecology': care of the environment (means) for human benefit (end)
- J. S. Mill (1806-73): man must wrest from nature "by force or ingenuity what he can for his own use"
- Consider short-term or long-term effects?
- Danger: minorities suffer; e.g., dam built on tribal land to provide electricity for city

Animals:

- Aristotle (384-322 BC): purpose of all animals is for the sake of man
- Aquinas (1225-74): all animals are naturally subject to man; hierarchy - beings at a lower level (animals) should serve those above (humans)
- J. Bentham (1748-1832): Principle: do what gives the most pleasure and the least pain. Consider the pleasure and pain of all sentient beings (animals can suffer). Consider quantity, not quality – "the quality of pleasure being equal, pushpin [a pub game] is as good as poetry".
- J. S. Mill: pleasures of the mind are higher than those of the body; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied

III INTRINSIC VALUE – valuable in itself

Environment:

- 'Deep ecology': all life forms have value -
 - a) the biosphere and ecosystems (the value of individual life forms being their contribution to the whole; not wrong to replace them if the whole is unaffected)
 - b) life, from humans to single-cell organisms; their richness and diversity are values
 - c) either all life forms are of equal moral significance or the more complex forms have greater significance

Animals:

Suggested criteria for a creature to have moral worth:

- Consciousness
- Ability to reason
- Free will
- Being autonomous
- Self – consciousness; aware of being alive [this may apply to some 'higher' animals such as chimpanzees; can one know whether they prefer to be alive?]

- Sentient: ability to suffer because of pain and /or experience pleasure [this excludes insentient organisms, such as insects, molluscs and plants]
- Personality
- Soul
- Beliefs
- Have goals
- Use a language
- Altruism
- Responsibilities, obligations, respect for/to others
- Beauty

Some humans lack these criteria: infants; some mentally handicapped or damaged; those in comas or senile. But they can perhaps be described as having potential for what they lack.

For lack of some of these criteria, creatures have been denied moral value by:

- Augustine (354-430): they are not rational
- Aquinas: they act by instinct, not thought
- Descartes (1596-1650): they lack consciousness and cannot experience pain or joy

Can any of the criteria be possessed in different degrees? If so, does the moral value correspondingly differ or is the value of each creature equal?

Kant (1724-1804) only considered humans (rational, with free will) as moral beings. Humanity is always to be treated as an end, never simply as a means. Can that imperative be extended to other creatures (not all being rational) and even to inanimate parts of the natural (e.g. rocks)? Kant did admire “the starry heavens above”.

IV PETER SINGER (1946-)

We should consider the interests of all sentient creatures (who can experience pain and pleasure).

Apply Bentham’s principle: each to count for one and none for more than one.

“The principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering ... of any other being.”

Thus similar interests of animals (with the same mental capabilities as humans) and humans (e.g. in avoiding pain or in preserving their life) are to be counted equally.

Therefore experiments with animals can only be approved “if the use of a retarded human being would also be justifiable”.

Preference for the interests of humans over those of animals is unjustified speciesism.

V JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN ETHICS: THE BIBLE

A] The universe has value because:

- God creates it:
Genesis 1: what God makes is ‘good’ (vv.4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), indeed ‘very good’ (v.31). Augustine adds: including maggots and scorpions.

[images:

- Tintoretto *Creation of the Animals* (c.1550) – www.wga.hu
- Master Bertram *Creation of the Animals* (1383) – www.wga.hu
- A12 Aberdeen Bestiary *Blessing of Birds and Fish* (c.1200) – also at www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary.comment/2r.hti

- A13 French Bible Historiale *Creation of the Animals* (mid 15th century), British Library (MS Royal 19 DII, folio 5v)
- Rubens *Landscape with a Rainbow* (c.1638) – www.wga.hu
- A14 Canterbury Bestiary *Adam Naming the Animals* (13th-14th centuries)]

G. Herbert (1593-1633) in *The Elixir*: “That which God doth touch and own cannot for less be told [i.e.reckoned, valued]”.

Nature reflects God’s glory and goodness: Psalms 19:1-6; 104; Ecclesiasticus 43.

Creation reveals the Creator, although it is not divine: Wisdom 13: 1-9.

St Bonaventure (1221-74, a Franciscan): all creatures are God-given signs – His shadows, echoes, pictures, kinds of portrayal and likeness of the eternal Wisdom.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89): “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.”

- God sustains and cares for it:

He sends rain and food (Psalm 104, Acts 14:17), decrees that land should have a rest from farming every seventh year (Exodus 23:11, Leviticus 25: 4f), food then being for poor people and wild animals. The seventh day of rest is for your ox and donkey to rest (Exodus 23:12, Deuteronomy 5:14). God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers in the field (Matthew 6: 25-30)

[images:

- J. Brueghel the Elder *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* (1615) – www.wga.hu
- J.Brueghel the Younger *Paradise* (c.1620) – www.abcgallery.com
- Rubens and J. Brueghel the Elder *Earthly Paradise with the Fall of Man* (c.1614-15) – www.artandarchitecture.org.uk
- L.Cranach the Elder *Paradise* (1530) – www.abcgallery.com
- J. Bassano *Adam and Eve in the Garden* (c 1570-75) – www.mega.nu
- N. Poussin *Spring: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* (1660-64) – www.abcgallery.com
- H. Bosch *Garden of Earthly Delights* (c.1500; detail: bottom part of left wing) – www.wga.hu
- L. Cranach the Elder *Adam and Eve* (1526) – www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/exhibitions/2007]

- God renews it:

Human sin breaks man’s harmony with nature. The soil is cursed and yields brambles and thistles (Genesis 3: 17-19)

Pairs of each species entered Noah’s ark so that their lives could be saved (Genesis 6:20). After the Flood, God made a covenant with all living things (Genesis 9: 9-17, c.f. Hosea 2:18).

[images:

- K. Memberger (c.1555-1618) *Embarkation of the Animals into the Ark* - www.residenzgalerie.at
- J. Brueghel the Elder *Entry of the Animals into Noah’s Ark* (1613) – www.getty.edu/art]

Christ, God’s Word, through whom all things came into being (John 1:3), became a creature (John 1:14). Through him [his incarnation, life, death and resurrection] God

reconciles to himself all things in heaven and on earth (Colossians 1:15-20, 2 Corinthians 5: 17-19, Ephesians 1: 9f). The whole creation is groaning in labour pains until it is freed from its slavery to corruption (Romans 8:21).

When the Messianic king comes, God will transform this world into a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). The curse of destruction will be abolished (Revelation 22:13). A kingdom of peace, where none will be harmed, includes predators and their former prey: wolves and lambs, panthers and kids, calves and lions, and even snakes (see Genesis 3) (Isaiah 11: 6-8, 65:25; Psalm 72).

Does this mean an after-life for animals? J. Wesley thought so. K. Ward claims that if animals suffer pain, that pain needs to be transfigured by a greater joy. For C.S. Lewis an after-life can only be for those with self-awareness and memory; a newt would not recognize itself.

B] Human Beings

Man uniquely is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26f). For Augustine the image is in man's reason and intellect. Alternatively, the creation of male and female (verse 27) suggests man is in the image of God, a loving triune family, when he lives as part of a loving family, sharing and returning God's love.

[image: Michelangelo The Creation of Adam (1508-12), Sistine Chapel - www.abcgallery.com]

God gives man 'dominion' over the rest of creation to rule it on God's behalf (Genesis 1: 26, 28; 2:15; 9:2; Psalm 8:6). This means participating in God's providential care of his creation. The Israelites, God's people, were strangers and guests in a land that belongs to God (Leviticus 25:23).

For food God gives man plants and fruit (Genesis 1:29) and all living creatures, except those with blood (Genesis 9:3).

Jesus allowed demons to enter a herd of pigs, which then charged over a cliff to their death in a lake (Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8: 26-29). For Augustine this meant we have no obligations towards animals.

Throughout the Bible there is the commandment to love our neighbour, particularly those in need. Should this obligation be extended to animals?

Examples: Sts Francis of Assisi (1181 / 82 – 1226), Anthony Abbot (251-356) and Sylvester (Pope 314-35).

[images:

- B. Gozzoli *Preaching to the Birds and Blessing Montefalco* (1542) – www.abcgallery.com
- Giotto *Preaching to the Birds* (c.1295) – www.abcgallery.com
- Master Of Saint Veronica *Saint Anthony Abbot Blessing the Animals, the Poor and the Sick* (c.1400-10) – www.getty.edu/art
- Maso di Banco *Pope St Sylvester's Miracle* (c.1337) – www.wga.hu]

VI] KEY QUESTIONS

- Are the values of the environment and animals extrinsic or intrinsic?
- Are humans the only beings of moral worth? If not, is moral value always the same or are some parts of the universe of greater value than others?

- What moral obligations towards the environment and animals can be derived from the Bible?

[The ethics of other religions could also be considered.]