



Humanum

ISSUES IN FAMILY, CULTURE & SCIENCE

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Animals: Man and Beast





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Animals: Man and Beast

LÉONIE CALDECOTT

The Living Planet assessment, drawn up by the Zoological Society of London and the World Wildlife Fund, has just published a report saying that global wildlife populations have fallen by 58% since 1970. The report suggests that if the trend continues this decline may reach two-thirds by the end of this decade. Whilst criticized by some environmental scientists in the US, this is nonetheless a reminder of the importance we need to place on monitoring the effects of human activity on the animal kingdom.

But the way we approach issues to do with wildlife differs greatly, depending on our local situation. It is important, for instance, for marine biologists to talk about preserving coral reefs from degradation, given how many species inhabit them. But if a devastating hurricane has just decimated all your other sources of food or income, as has just happened in the Philippines, it may be shocking, but hardly surprising, to find local fishermen dynamiting these very reefs in order to flush out fish. Starvation does not wait easily on the big picture.

In the US itself, environmental protection strategies can also have odd outcomes where wildlife is concerned. I have friends in Northampton, MA who regularly spot bears around their house: an early-morning cyclist there was chased by a black bear at the beginning of October. Significantly she didn't report the incident for fear of the bear being shot: "I believe since it was so dark, the bear and I bumped into each other," she told a local newspaper.

Not everyone would be so willing to say "excuse me" to a wild animal capable of inflicting harm. A couple of years ago, a book entitled *Nature Wars* by Jim Sterba outlined a growing crisis in human/wildlife interaction in sprawling urban areas that intersect with the habitat of newly burgeoning wildlife populations. Sterba's book looked at the spread of human population on the East Coast (home to roughly two-thirds of Americans), from urban concentration into suburban and semi-rural sprawl, largely driven by modern reliance on the automobile.

Early settlers cleared away some 250 million acres of forest in the northeast of the United States. Yet with the urbanization of the human economy and the abandonment

of small-scale agriculture, as well as the reliance on oil, coal and gas for fuel (rather than timber), one half to two thirds of this landscape has now been reforested: with predictable results that people with much less know-how concerning the realities of the wild now find themselves sharing their environment with unexpected visitors. Flocks of Canada geese depositing poop on your golf course, deer and beaver decimating trees in your front yard, and yes, black bears that bump into you on Main Street: this is hardly the stuff of sentimentally satisfying nature shows watched in the comfort of your living room.

The problem generates furious debate, as you can see if you google responses to Sterba's book. For the question of our relationship with animals arouses strong passions. I know many people in my daughters' generation who are fiercely committed vegans. It is as though the animal kingdom had somehow become a new religion: a re-boot of an age-old paganism. And yet at the heart of this reaction against eating and exploiting "anything that has eyes" (as one young friend put it to me) is a legitimate desire to live more responsibly and less greedily in a world where rapacity and violence seem to hold sway.

Hence the relevance of my late husband's reflection on the Franciscan perspective on nature and the animal kingdom: *Animals in the Hierarchy of Creation*. If we understand the panoply of creatures as an expression of the glory of God, fallen with us and yet redeemed in Christ, then our relationship to that world is infused with an entirely new respect: not because we worship nature, but because we worship God through the very creation which manifests him, and is sanctified all over again by his incarnation as a human being in the heart of it. Something which gives a particular signification to the role of man as pivotal in this hierarchy. Then, and only then, has man "stripped from his soul the last rag of nature worship, and can return to nature."

Whilst not worshipping nature, we do need to grasp the philosophical challenge that the rest of creation presents us with. As David Bentley Hart puts it: "In the end, it comes down to metaphysics (as all things do)." Mary Taylor's piece on Hart, and Deborah Savage's careful reflection on our relationship to non-rational animals both grapple with this. And indeed theology has a lot to bring to this discussion. What, for example, does the notion of 'dominion' entail in terms of our responsibility towards animals? "Our relationship to the goods of creation, and in particular to the animals, is complex," writes Savage. "It calls for discernment of the good they represent, itself a multi-valent notion; it can be useful—but it can also be beautiful. Animals can be useful to man. But they are also creatures with their own inherent goodness and beauty. If our task is not only to till the Garden, but also to 'keep it,' it is the fullness of

this truth that must be kept in mind.”

Aside from anything else, the reflections of theologians and philosophers from earlier phases of human civilization bring a perspective to the table which allow us to examine critically the issues which perplex us in the midst of preternaturally evolving ecological crises. Chris Hall reviews an important book, *Nature's Beautiful Order* by Christopher Blum and John Cuddeback, which addresses the role of science in this respect. It is “that rarest of modern biology textbooks: one that starts with beauty and then works to facts and figures, rather than the reverse.” Such an approach is the only one which has any hope of informing a balanced perspective on the mystery that animal life presents to us.

The human perspective is one which has to begin with the substantive rather than the quantitative. This is particularly true when we are dealing with our relationship with animals. Rachel Coleman's tribute to a classic in this field, Adolf Portmann's *Animal Forms and Patterns*, and Fr. Paolo Prosperi's “In Praise of Children's Love of Animals,” provide crucial clues for reflecting on the mystery of creature-hood. Indeed, the reason for considering the issues through the eyes of a child is far from sentimental: it is sound anthropology. Prosperi goes to the heart of the original intuition about the role animals play in human development.

Just as for Adam the intimate dialogue or familiarity with God is the condition and, so to speak, the “sphere” in the context of which the naming of the animals can take place (Adam is instructed by God to name the animals and the animals “are brought in front of him” by God): in the same way, the confident intimacy between the child and his parents and their reliable presence are for the child the necessary context of his curious opening to the “marvelous mystery” of the world of animals.

In the light of this insight, I cannot help wondering whether there is a connection between our lack of welcome towards children, and our increasingly infantile attachment to pets instead. Alligators in the sewers of New York city aside, P.D. James, in *The Children of Men*, her prophetic novel about a humanity which has become universally infertile, portrays sad women pushing kittens around in prams (trs: baby buggies). Every human being needs meaningful contact in their life: but this need becomes stuck in an infantile phase if we do not connect with new generations of our own species. Animals are a source of wonder to the child within: but they can become a symptom of dissociation in society as well.

Speaking of dissociation, there are even more interesting questions about our interaction with animals. Temple Grandin's *Animals in Translation*, reviewed for us by Melanie Danner, makes a fascinating link between autism in humans, and the non-verbal communication processes of animals. It isn't only a question of placing ourselves in their hooves—or paws—and seeing things from their perspective. But also of acknowledging that the sub-rational brain in a human being cannot be simply obviated or overcome by will-power or argumentation. We all have an amygdala: that's just a fact of life. Contact with and observation of animals can do a great deal to help us to understand and negotiate the impact that this 'reptilian brain' has on human behavior.

A healthy respect for animals, both wild and domesticated, does not however mean we have to ideologize these questions. From animal-rights activists such as Peter Singer, to more moderate campaigners such as Bernard Rollin (both have books reviewed in this issue), the battle over 'speciesism' may ultimately be missing the point. A more interesting take is Joel Salatin's carefully developed agricultural experiment, noted in this issue both through a reprinted interview with Salatin, and Katrina Ten Eyck's review of Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, which uses Salatin's farm to explore the issue of whether we can legitimately consume animal products.

"On Salatin's Polyface Farm," writes Ten Eyck, "one can see healthy ecological relationships in action. In contrast to the monocultures found on industrial farms, at Polyface Farm one finds pasture lands, beef cattle, egg-laying hens, broiler chickens, pigs, rabbits, grapevines, an orchard, and forest land. Each part is related to the whole, and each part is considered in its wholeness. Salatin employs the word *holon* (crafted from the Greek *holos*, whole, and the ending *-on*, as in proton or neutron) to capture the fact that on a healthy farm the wholeness of a cow or a blade of grass must be cared for, which allows it to also be a part of the entirety of the farm—an intricate ecosystem."

Isn't this the central point? The human/animal interaction is part of a whole ecosystem which goes back millennia. The practices of modern industrialized exploitation arouse legitimate indignation in those concerned with the welfare of animals; but we have to understand the underlying factors which gave rise to this type of exploitation. Agri-business and battery cage animals are a modern aberration: a long tradition built up over centuries gives us a different perspective on animal husbandry. A long philosophical tradition regarding the natural sciences exists to help us balance the needs of humanity with a healthy respect for the rest of creation.

We don't need to behave like unthinking idiots when it comes to those mysterious creatures that share our planet with us. The ability to catalogue and name them presupposes the ability to observe and appreciate. We don't have to use oil gauged from the brains, or ivory poached from the tusks of the greatest sentient emanations of divine glory. Neither do we need to experiment on small animals in order to manufacture cosmetics. We have many decisions to make about how we steward the cornucopia of gifts with which God's creative genius populated the world. Those decisions should at least be informed by a sincere desire to honor the Giver in whose image we are made. And the fact that he put 'dumb beasts' in front of us to be named: to be spoken of by us. The gift of language is something we are commanded to use not just on our own behalf. As Strat put it in *The Radiance of Being*:

The animals, plants, and minerals, the stars and elements, can be said to "praise" their Maker, either simply by their very existence, or else through man, who gives them a voice they do not possess in themselves.

Léonie Caldecott is the UK editor of both *Humanum* and *Magnificat*. With her late husband Stratford she founded the Center for Faith and Culture in Oxford, its summer school and its journal *Second Spring*. Her eldest daughter Teresa, along with other colleagues, now work with her to take Strat's contribution forward into the future.

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A Visceral Understanding of Life and Death: Joel Salatin Talks about Farming

MADELINE OSTRANDER

Joel Salatin is no simple farmer. When he speaks, he at times takes on the air of a Southern preacher, philosopher, heretic, businessman, activist, or ecological engineer. Since Michael Pollan's book [The Omnivore's Dilemma](#) and the film *Food, Inc.* brought him to fame as the man who raises meat the right way, Salatin has become a sought-after speaker. But he still spends most of his time on his rural Virginia farm—with the chickens, baling hay, moving cows from one paddock to another. He is a self-described “Christian libertarian environmentalist capitalist lunatic” and has a penchant for perplexingly long catchphrases. It is perhaps Salatin's unwillingness to compartmentalize that has made him such a compelling moral voice for the food movement. For Salatin, farming is inseparable from ethics, politics, faith, or ecology.

Salatin's farm, Polyface or “the farm of many faces,” has been in his family for 50 years. At its heart is a practice called “holistic range management,” where cattle mimic the grazing patterns of wild herd animals. The strategy cuts feedlots out of the equation altogether and stores carbon deep in the roots and soil of Polyface's lush perennial pasture.

There's a missionary quality to Salatin's farming. He speaks of his work as a ministry and as healing. He calls his animals “co-laborers” and “dance partners” and says he respects each animal's distinctiveness. Who better to articulate an ethic of [how, when, and whether we should raise and eat our fellow animals?](#)

Madeline Ostrander: What do you think a sustainable diet should look like?

Joel Salatin: What would a sustainable diet look like? Oh, my!

Ostrander: Because it's often talked about as a vegetarian diet.

Salatin: No, not at all. I think we need to go back to localized diets, and in North America, yes, we can really grow perennials, so there would be a lot of herbivore—

lamb, beef—in a diet. And our fruits and vegetables, which have a high water content, would be grown close to home, preferably in our backyards. In 1945, 40 percent of all vegetables consumed in the United States were grown in backyards.

I think a local diet would have an indigenous flair. If you're along the coast, you'd eat more seafood. If you're inland, you would eat more herbivore and vegetables. If you're in Florida, you would eat more citrus. Historically, it's not about the relationship of meat to vegetables or whatever. It's more about, what does this area grow well with a minimum of inputs?

Ostrander: Cows have gotten a bad rap lately for their contributions to environmental problems. What's your response?

Salatin: Don't blame the cow for the negatives of the industrial food system. All of the data that the anti-meat people use assumes an irrigated, concentrated animal feeding operation. Over 50 percent of the annuals that we grow in American agriculture are to feed cows. Cows aren't supposed to eat corn. They're supposed to mow forage. It's completely inverted from nature's paradigm. To use that inverted paradigm to demonize grazing, the most efficacious mechanism for planet restoration, is either consciously antagonistic to the truth or is ignorant of the kind of synergistic models that are out here.

Here's the thing. There's no system in nature that does not have an animal component as a recycling agent. Doesn't exist. Fruits and vegetables do best if there is some animal component with them—chickens or a side shed with rabbits. Manure is magic.

Now, we could argue about how many animals we should be eating. I really don't think Americans should be eating so much chicken. Because chicken requires grain; it's an omnivore. Historically, herbivores—beef, lamb, goat—were every man's meat because they could be raised on perennials. The kings ate poultry because they're the only ones who had enough luxury of extra foodstuffs for birds.

Poultry used to fill a recycling niche. Today, if every single kitchen had enough chickens attached to it, there would not be egg commerce in America. All the eggs could be produced from kitchen scraps. What a wonderful thing that would be. There's no excuse for an egg factory.

Beef cattle—there's no excuse for a feedlot. We don't need all those irrigated acres in Nebraska. See? And suddenly all of the data that the animal demonizers are using just crumbles like a house of cards.

Ostrander: Your website says that your farm respects and honors the animals you raise. What does it mean to respect an animal and then eat it?

Salatin: It is a profound spiritual truth that you cannot have life without death. When you chomp down on a carrot and masticate it in your mouth, that carrot is being sacrificed in order for you to have life. Everything on the planet is eating and being eaten. If you don't believe it, just lie naked in your flower bed for three days and see what gets eaten. That sacrifice is what feeds regeneration. In our very antiseptic culture today, people don't have a visceral understanding of life and death.

Ostrander: What do you feel is your responsibility to the animals that you raise on Polyface Farm?

Salatin: Our first responsibility is to try to figure out what kind of a habitat allows them to fully express their physiological distinctiveness. The cow doesn't eat corn; she doesn't eat dead cows; she doesn't eat cow manure, which is what is currently being fed to cows in the industrial food system. We feed cows grass, and that honors and respects the cow-ness of the cow.

Chickens—their beaks are not there for us to cut off, as industrial operations do. Their beaks are there for them to scratch and to hunt for insects. So we raise them out on pasture, in protected enclosures, in a free environment, so they can be birds.

We look at nature and say, “How do these animals live?” And we imitate that template.

We have the chickens follow the cows, the way birds follow herbivores—the egret on the rhino's nose. The chickens sanitize behind the herbivores, scratch in the dung, eat out the parasites, spread the dung into the pasture, and eat the insects that the herbivores uncovered while grazing.

The pigs make compost from cow manure, which we mix with wood chips. They love to do it, and they don't need their oil changed, they don't need spare parts, and they're fully allowed to express their pig-ness. Then animals become team players—partners in this great land-healing ministry.

This is all extremely symbiotic and creates a totally different relationship than when you're simply trying to grow the fatter, bigger, cheaper animal.

But the animals also have an easier life than they would in nature. Nature is not very philanthropic. I mean, every day the gazelle wakes up and hopes she can outrun the

lion, and every day the lion wakes up and hopes she can outrun a gazelle. We protect our animals from predators and weather. We give them good food and care for them, and in return, they are more prolific.

Ostrander: So honoring the pig-ness of the pig is about ecology as much as ethics.

Salatin: Honoring the pig-ness of the pig establishes a moral and ethical framework on which we build respect for the Mary-ness of Mary and the Tom-ness of Tom. It is how we respect and honor the least of these that creates an ethical framework on which we honor and respect the greatest of these.

A culture like ours—that views plants and animals as inanimate piles of protoplasmic structure to be manipulated however cleverly we, in our hubris, can imagine—will soon view its citizens and other cultures in the same kind of disrespectful way.

Ostrander: You claim that the kind of agriculture that you do could feed the world. How would that work?

Salatin: Well, for example, take cows. If we do what I call mob-stocking herbivorous solar conversion lignified carbon sequestration fertilization, we could triple the number of herbivores and the amount of carbon we're storing in the soil.

Ostrander: What was that long phrase?

Salatin: Mob-stocking herbivorous solar conversion lignified carbon sequestration fertilization. The idea is you're mob-stocking: Herbivores in nature are always mobbed up for predator protection. Now we don't have predators, so we use an electric fence to keep them mobbed up. So we're not Luddites. We're using high-tech.

We farm grass, and we harvest that grass with cows. But we don't just turn the cows out into a field. We move them every day from paddock to paddock and only give them access to a single spot a couple days a year. We let the grass grow to what we call full physiological expression, the juvenile growth spurt. By doing that we're actually collecting a lot more solar energy and metabolizing it into biomass than you would if the grass were kept short like a lawn.

The difference is, for example, Augusta County, where we are, averages 80 cow days per acre (a cow day is what one cow will eat in a day). On our farm we average 400 cow days per acre, and we've never bought a bag of chemical fertilizer and we've never planted a seed. We've taken the soils on our farm from 1.5 percent organic matter in the early 1960s to an average of 8 percent organic matter today. That cycle of

herbivore, perennial, and predation builds up root biomass below the ground and sequesters carbon and organic matter. It's the same process that built all the deep soils of the world—the Pampas in Argentina, outer Mongolia with yaks and sheep, the American plains with the buffalo.

Now, if you consider vegetables, we could do edible landscapes. There are 35 million acres of lawn in the United States. I tell people, we'll know that we're running out of food when the golf courses around Phoenix start growing food instead of petroleum-based grass to be irrigated with precious water. We'll know that we're short of food when we can't run the Kentucky Derby anymore, because we need that land for farming. Go to Mexico. They don't mow the interstates. Every farmer along the highway has a staked-out milk cow.

Ostrander: Can you describe how you slaughter animals at Polyface?

Salatin: Well, the chickens, for example, are taken from the field right into our open-air slaughter facility, and we don't electrocute them like the industry does. We do a kind of a halal, or a kosher type of kill, which is just slitting the jugular, and they gradually just faint or fade away.

We have raised them. We have nurtured them and cared for them. It's different from the compartmentalization of the industrial system, where we have people who have never seen the animal alive doing the slaughter.

And frankly, I believe it is psychologically inappropriate to slaughter animals every single day. Even in the Bible, the Levites drew straws; they ran shifts in the tabernacle where they did animal sacrifices.

Ostrander: Is there a different emotional experience that people have when they're eating food raised on Polyface than if they're eating a McDonald's hamburger?

Salatin: We have a 24/7, open-door policy. Anyone is welcome to come at any time to see anything, anywhere without an appointment or a phone call. We encourage anyone to come and walk the fields, pet the animals, bring their children, gather the eggs out of the nest boxes—in other words, to build a relationship and create a memory that can follow them all the way to the dinner plate.

Our culture has systematically alienated people from the experience of dining. I can't believe how many kids come here and watch a chicken lay an egg and then say, "Oh, is that where they come from?" The amount of culinary and ecological real-life

ignorance in our culture is unbelievable.

So what we want to do at Polyface is provide a platform, so that anyone can come and partake of this marvelous theater that was all a part of normal life 150 years ago. We want to create a greater sense of all the mystery and appreciation for seasons and for the proper plant-animal-human relationships.

Some people even want to process some chickens with us. And that is a very powerful memory to take to the table with you. If the average person partook of the processing of an industrial chicken, for example, they probably wouldn't eat chicken. But by coming here and seeing the respect that's afforded to that animal all the way through, we can create a thankful, gracious, honoring experience when we come to eat.

Madeline Ostrander interviewed Joel Salatin for [Can Animals Save Us?](#), the Spring 2011 issue of [YES! Magazine](#). Madeline is senior editor at YES!

Animals in the Hierarchy of Creation

STRATFORD CALDECOTT

The following article is extracted from Stratford Caldecott's book *The Radiance of Being* (Angelico Press, 2013). It forms part of a chapter entitled *Saving the Planet*, in which the author explores "the relation of ecology to the Christian notion of redemption." In this passage, the way he deals with humanity in relation to the animal kingdom shows the fruitfulness of the dialogue Caldecott was engaging in between metaphysical concerns and the issues raised by ecologists.

In the history of the Latin Church, it is, of course, not only the Franciscans who have contributed to the development of Christian ecological awareness. The Celtic saints and the Benedictines are often mentioned in this connection.^[i] But Pope John Paul II made St. Francis, not St. Benedict or St. Columba, the patron saint of ecology in 1979, and he did so for understandable reasons. One might ask, however, why more saints and teachers of the Church have not been obvious candidates for this position. Deborah Jones, in her book *The School of Compassion*, points to the disconcerting indifference if not hostility towards the non-human creation on the part of many Christian teachers and authorities, for whom animals and the rest of nature were merely for man's use and would have no part in any resurrection. This applies even to the great Franciscan theologian Bonaventure. In the *Breviloquium*, where he treats of the resurrection, he argues that the animal and vegetable creation will be saved only in man, who "has a likeness to every kind of creature."

Such a conclusion can be seen as the legacy of a misunderstood or imperfectly assimilated Platonism, or even a kind of Gnosticism that values the spiritual at the expense of the corporeal. Rather than criticize the tradition along these lines, however, I prefer to remember that the Church is like "a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Matt. 13:52). Historical circumstances and the challenges that arise may provoke a development of doctrine.

In fact there are at least three areas where it is pretty obvious that Catholic teaching is currently undergoing development. One is the "theology of the body" (the term popularized by John Paul II in his series of Wednesday talks concerning gender,

marriage, and sexuality); another is over the question of religious pluralism and the urgent dialogue between traditions of faith, and the third concerns nature and the environment. In my view all three are related, and they each require a “return to metaphysics”; that is, to a renewed appreciation of ontology and symbolism. But this time around, we must find a place for the rest of nature in our philosophy, in the spirit of St. Francis himself, whose instinct was to make special provision for the feeding of birds and cattle on Christmas Day.

The Revealing of the Sons of God

In Paul’s Letter to the Romans (8:18–23), the Apostle writes:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.^[ii] We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

This passage is quite dense, and has been much commented upon. It seems to imply, first, that the “revealing of the sons of God” will liberate the natural creation as a whole from entropy, death, suffering, and decay, and, next, that this revelation of the sons of God is equivalent to our “adoption as sons” and with the “redemption of our bodies.” But what is the link between adoptive sonship and the redemption of our bodies, and how can a spiritual process like this affect the whole of creation? I don’t have time here to explore all the eschatological implications of the passage, or the intriguing questions raised by the notion of a “cosmic fall.” My emphasis will be on spiritual anthropology. I will interpret the “revealing of the sons of God” in terms of humanity’s role as microcosm and mediator.

This idea has a long history. Right up until the time of Francis and Bonaventure and indeed the age of industrialism, the world was viewed as an organic whole, ordered from within, possessing a sacred and spiritual value by virtue of its creation by God and the continued divine presence within it. The stars were thought to be angelic creatures, the movements of their dance helping to determine the pattern of events unfolding below. The physical elements themselves were imagined as conscious

beings, participating in a cosmic intelligence. It is quite in keeping with this ancient tradition for the Bible in the Canticle of Daniel to call upon all of creation to bless the Lord, including the sun and moon, stars of the heavens, clouds of the sky, showers and rain.^[iii] The animals, plants, and minerals, the stars and elements, can be said to “praise” their Maker, either simply by their very existence, or else through man, who gives them a voice they do not possess in themselves. (This is in fact the tradition to which Bonaventure appeals when he describes man as containing the essences of all other creatures.) In this view, the human being occupies a central place in the universe, but he does so as a microcosm containing all the elements of nature, and faculties or powers corresponding to both animals and angels. Adam’s role in the cosmos is a priestly and mediatory one, radically compromised by the Fall, but restored in Christ, who by assuming human nature assumed the whole of nature by taking on a body.^[iv]

St. Francis is the “patron saint of the environment” partly because he spoke to the birds and was kind to animals, but also because he understood and lived this mediatory role. The particular originality of his approach was to address not only the animals but even the elements of nature as his brothers and sisters; a spirituality expressed in the Canticle of Brother Sun, and exemplified in the way he spoke to Brother Fire and the other elements on various occasions. This was no mere sentimental romanticism (though he was certainly extremely romantic). His espousal of poverty brought him into the closest contact with the physical elements, and made him intensely aware of his dependence on them, under divine providence. He was conscious both of the presence of God within and through them, and of their infinite difference from God as mere creatures.

This love of nature was different from pagan animism, as G.K. Chesterton writes in the second chapter of his biography of Francis. The Celtic saints and Desert Fathers, and the Benedictine monks, had prepared the ground, but St. Francis was the beginning of a new stage in our relationship with nature (one that, it might be argued, has not yet been totally fulfilled). Chesterton writes of a necessary “purge of paganism” in the early Church, until at last the flowers and stars could recover their first innocence, and fire and water “be worthy to be the brother and sister of a saint”:

For water itself has been washed. Fire itself has been purified as by fire. Water is no longer the water into which slaves were flung to feed the fishes. Fire is no longer that fire through which children were passed to Moloch. Flowers smell no more of the forgotten garlands gathered in the garden of Priapus; stars stand no

more as signs of the far frigidity of gods as cold as those cold fires. They are like all new things newly made and awaiting new names, from one who shall come to name them. Neither the universe nor the earth have now any longer the old sinister significance of the world. They await a new reconciliation with man, but they are already capable of being reconciled. Man has stripped from his soul the last rag of nature worship, and can return to nature.[\[v\]](#)

What Chesterton leaves out of account here is the Eastern Church, which had become separated from the West, but preserved in its liturgical theology and in its iconographic tradition a cosmic vision that we must take into account. Our present historical age requires us to breathe with two lungs, if we are to have a hope of responding to the new post-Christian, post-religious mentality to which the West has given birth. And of the Eastern Fathers, St. Maximus the Confessor gave perhaps the most sophisticated theological expression to the view of man as mediator. Pope Benedict summarized the teaching of Maximus as follows:

God entrusted to man, created in his image and likeness, the mission of unifying the cosmos. And just as Christ unified the human being in himself, the Creator unified the cosmos in man. He showed us how to unify the cosmos in the communion of Christ and thus truly arrived at a redeemed world. Hans Urs von Balthasar, one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century, referred to this powerful saving vision when, “relaunching” Maximus—he defined his thought with the vivid expression *Kosmische Liturgie*, “cosmic liturgy.” Jesus, the one Savior of the world, is always at the center of this solemn “liturgy.” The efficacy of his saving action which definitively unified the cosmos is guaranteed by the fact that in spite of being God in all things, he is also integrally a man and has the “energy” and will of a man. . . . Jesus Christ is the reference point that gives light to all other values. This was the conclusion of the great Confessor’s witness. And it is in this way, ultimately, that Christ indicates that the cosmos must become a liturgy, the glory of God, and that worship is the beginning of true transformation, of the true renewal of the world.[\[vi\]](#)

Balthasar’s book on Maximus, to which the Pope refers, makes the point that the Confessor overcame the tendency in Christian thought to make the corporeal world of nature merely a ladder to heaven that will one day be kicked away, by positing an indestructible relationship between spirit and matter, an “apologia for finite, created being in the face of the overwhelming power of the world of ideas.”[\[vii\]](#) The unity of the many depends on the parts and their relationship to each other. And since God is

completely transcendent, the world of intellect takes us, in a sense, no closer to him than does the world disclosed by the senses.^[viii] This opens the way for a much deeper, less timorous, appreciation of the beauty and goodness of nature in general.

The Blessed Earth

Ecology is therefore a serious business; a theological business. If (as I suggested) the animals are angels—not each cat or dog, centipede or flamingo a distinct angel, but each species or family of animals the fragmented instantiation of an intelligent, immortal angelic force, a constituent element in the cosmos—then surely we have to recognize a new seriousness in the heinous crime of extinguishing a species from the face of the earth: an angel is being thrust out of God’s creation by man.

In the first chapter of the book of Genesis, God “saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good” (1:31). Here is the earliest and best refutation of the philosophical heresy of recent times (that of David Hume and others) that separates facts from values. Implicit in Scripture is the sense that there is something ontological about goodness: in other words, that it is an intrinsic attribute of being. If this means anything, it surely means that all creatures are worthy of love. They deserve it; it belongs to them. But at the same time we have to remember that in the traditional understanding of the word, to love something is not just to feel warm and friendly towards it: it is to will its existence, its life, its fulfillment. We are therefore obliged, as free creatures capable of having a moral obligation, to love the creation in something like the way that God loves it.

Animals are due that love, whether they are angels or not. But now we have to ask, can that “debt” be called a “right”—a right to be loved, to be respected, to be nourished and helped? Is there such a thing as “animal rights”?

It seems to be generally assumed by Christian and other philosophers that a “right” can only be possessed by someone who is capable also of assuming obligations. But it seems to me that it is always obligations, duties, and debts that in the first place create the “rights” which correspond to them. You have a right to the money I owe you because I have a debt to you, or an obligation towards you; I do not first have an obligation to pay the money because you have a right to it. My obligation to you is based on your prior gift to me (or simply your need for the money), coupled with my love for you that leads me to want your good. Gifts naturally evoke gratitude, and the desire to reciprocate. We are all creatures, receiving all that we have, including our

existence, from a divine Source as well as from each other. We must recognize that we all start from a position of obligation, of gratitude, of love. Any subsequent debts we incur, as we receive more from each other during life, simply add to this fundamental indebtedness—and the whole moral life, inspired by love, is a joyful repayment of an endless debt.

Rights, then, according to this line of thought, are entirely secondary. They are a way of describing and, ultimately, codifying our debts, both as individuals and as members of a group. To the extent that they enter into positive law, then it can certainly be said that “I owe you because you have a right.” But that is only because this is the way we have defined our obligations. Having done so, rights are used to remind us of our duties under the eternal law of God and existence.

From that it seems to follow that there may be creatures that (unlike humans) have rights without having duties—simply because they generate obligations in us by their very existence. If that is the case, it would after all make sense to talk about “animal rights.” But we are not talking, yet, about rights in law. The codification in law of animal and of human rights might look very different. Animals, and the rest of the natural world, do not enter into legal arrangements, and here the reciprocity that is attributed to rights and duties comes into its own. To the extent that rights are contractual, animals are not eligible for them. Perhaps there is a case for keeping the word “rights” for these contractual or positive relationships only. Yet I can’t help wondering if “animal rights” might still be a way of describing part of the general obligation we possess towards the world to maintain and preserve it, its integrity and beauty, both for its own sake (as having intrinsic value) and for the sake of our own distant neighbors and unborn descendants.

After all, though animals may not enter into a contract, they do enter into a covenant. To be specific, they enter into the “rainbow covenant” that God made with Noah as high priest of creation (Gen. 8:20–22) and with the birds, cattle, and beasts of the earth (Gen. 9:9–17). According to the terms of that covenant, God would not destroy the earth again with a flood like the one that had just taken place. The terms of the covenant also specified that the life of man was sacrosanct, whereas animals were given to man to eat. Vegetarians might quibble with this, but it does at least mean that animals are included as partners in an agreement: for their part, they are required not to attack man (9:5). While the covenant does not assign rights to the parties, it imposes duties. The fact that animals are given to man for food also implies that they are not for abuse. They now come under his stewardship in the way the vegetable world did

before: as entrusted to his care. He may use them for his bodily needs; but nothing is said of his luxuries. The Bible does not envisage the grotesque abuse of animals, for example in cosmetic experiments.

So what do we conclude? The other day my friend's pet was put down, after it became too ill to survive and was living in constant pain. The same night I slapped a mosquito that was keeping me awake, and squashed a spider that would have frightened my children (in fact it frightened me). I put antiseptic on a cut to kill any lurking germs. Did these creatures, large and small, have a right to life? They certainly had a right not to be treated cruelly, or killed without reason. But nothing I have said actually implies that they have a right to life in the absolute sense: the sense in which we rightly apply it to an innocent human being. The reason for this surely lies in the intrinsic difference between the animal and the human. The animal is worthy of love, but love must respect the nature of the creature in question. If the goodness in things is "ontological," it is proportioned to their being, and to their level of being. A dog or a spider is not in itself a person, even if the species, or the angel of the species, is one. A human being is not merely the instantiation of a species, but a unique individual with a unique destiny. He or she is made "in the image of God," not in the image of an angel, and the sacredness of human life (even in the womb) is correspondingly of a different order. Moreover humanity has a "dominion" over the rest of creation that it was simply not given over its own nature, this being reserved to God alone. All of this we see reflected in the rainbow covenant.

However we misuse it, our dominion over the animals and over the whole earth in some way persists. The fact that the very survival of the earthly ecosystem is now threatened by industrial and military technology demonstrates the fact. For better or worse, it is not "speciesism" but realism to locate human beings at the center of the world, as microcosm. But that centrality, far from implying careless disregard and selfish irresponsibility, implies the exact opposite. That is our fundamental obligation which we are now massively failing to fulfill: the obligation to "dress and keep," to "till and cultivate" the blessed earth which sustains all our lives and speaks to us continually of the glory of God.

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[i] John Carey's book *A Single Ray of the Sun* discusses this neglected strand of Celtic and Irish thought in the legends of the saints, the writings of Augustinus Hibernicus, *In Tenga Bithnua*, with its prophecy of a resurrected earth, and Eriugena's *Periphyseon*.

[ii] Literally: ". . . the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

[iii] Daniel 3:57–88, 56.

[iv] Maximus the Confessor, *Ambiguum* 7, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2003), 45–74.

[v] The passage ends rhetorically as follows: "While it was yet twilight a figure appeared silently and suddenly on a little hill above the city, dark against the fading darkness. For it was the end of a long and stern night, a night of vigil, not unvisited by stars. He stood with his hands lifted, as in so many statues and pictures, and about him was a burst of birds singing; and behind him was the break of day." G.K. Chesterton, *Collected Works*, vol. II (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 44–5.

[vi] Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, 25 June 2008. (All papal speeches and documents may be found on the web at www.vatican.va.)

[vii] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 239.

[viii] *Ibid.*, 172.

In Praise of Children's Love of Animals

PAOLO PROSPERI FSCB

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Gen 2:18-22, emphases are author's)

How can we explain children's attraction to the animal kingdom? What is this irresistible appeal, this enchantment that almost every child feels before the world of animals?

To be sure, the young child is by far more irresistibly drawn to animals when in the presence of his parents, so much so that without it, the appealing charm of animals not only disappears, but is transformed into terror. Just as for Adam the intimate dialogue or familiarity with God is the condition and, so to speak, the "sphere" in the context of which the naming of the animals can take place (Adam is instructed by God to name the animals and the animals "are brought in front of him" by God), in the same way, the confident intimacy between the child and his parents and their reliable presence are for the child the necessary context of his curious opening to the "marvelous mystery" of the world of animals. The parents—and the mother in particular, as the one who represents God's intimacy, God's closeness and reliability—are the condition for the child's opening to the animal kingdom. For, in a sense, the animal kingdom is able to represent or symbolize the other crucial side of the Divine Other: absolute Difference.

Human existence is firstly and above all the adventure of a progressive entering into friendship with God, and of an ever-growing deepening of this relationship; since it is truly an adventure, it is filled with wondrous discoveries, precisely because it is unraveled in time through the mediation of the world. The world of animals plays an irreplaceable, marvelous role in this story of getting to know God through the world. Animals played this role in the very beginning and continue to do so wherever an ounce of purity remains unspoiled in the human heart. It is preserved in the heart of children, who—after all—take the purest delight in animals.

The animal kingdom too—to be sure—has suffered the consequences of the fall. A sinister shadow dwells in the world of wild nature alongside its splendor—though not in the same degree and mode as happens in the human world. Light and shadow: for all of creation—not only the human—“waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rm 8:19). Nothing is anymore as it should and could have been. All creatures long for their liberation: the lion and the eagle no less than the human. They wait to be fully “freed” through the very liberation of the human, for whom they have been created.

But in the child, because of his innocence, something of the primordial encounter between Adam and the animals, something of that dawn-like wonder, is renewed and kept alive. What does the child see when his father brings him to the zoo for the first time and, looking at the elephant, the child points his little finger toward him and, filled with awe, he “says its name”? What is the child seeing? And what is that which irresistibly compels him to talk to the elephant, as if trying to establish a kind of friendship, a kind of communion?

This is the experience of a new way of encountering the similar—by this is meant one who is at the same time like me and different from me, close and distant, familiar and foreign. In this sense, to be sure (as Genesis 2 clearly suggests) there is a hidden, profound figural relationship between the attraction that the child feels toward a dolphin or a lion, and the attraction he will one day feel for the woman—if he is male—and vice versa—if she is female. The former is a prophecy of the latter, the figure, the typos. The attraction has the same structure: it is elicited by the experience of the likeness of the other—as a mysterious unity of identity and difference. The elephant has two eyes like me, a mouth like me, in a sense...he has a nose....but how different his nose is from mine! He has ears, but how huge they are! And how scary are those huge tusks... but especially: how big he is! He is so big, so big! And I feel so small, so small before him as I never felt before...

Identity and difference, sameness and difference: this is the profound reason for that particular feeling we cannot describe, but we all remember, that unfathomable *mélange* of awe and attraction, of wonder and fear, we have felt in front of animals (it would be interesting here to explore how different species affect us). Of course, this mixed feeling of fear and attraction, of awe and love, is different from the one the same child will feel the day when he falls in love for the first time. The feelings in each case are qualitatively incomparable. They belong to a different order. The animal is not a person. Nonetheless, the child tries instinctively and immediately to establish something like a friendship, or at least a peaceable coexistence. And if it is true that an animal cannot be the kind of “helper” that the woman will be one day, it is also true that there is another irreplaceable quality in the living image of the animal—in all animals in some sense—that is lacking in the woman, precisely because of her incomparably greater likeness to Adam: the woman—no matter how beautiful she is—cannot fly. The eagle can. And this is why it will become spontaneous for the “grown” child to see integrated in the woman—through poetic, metaphorical imagination—all the inexhaustible, inaccessible qualities proper to those animals that enchanted him in his childhood: the flight of the eagle, the gaze of the cat, the elegant dance of the ibex who jumps with amazing nimbleness from rock to rock, among the abysses, the rapid, noble running of the “mare of the Pharaoh’s chariots”^[1]... Yes, it is true: as we already said, the woman for the man (and the man for the woman) is, more than anything else in the visible universe, that other, who can at the same time be impenetrably “other” and no less than intimately “close.” To explain further, the other person, as a spiritual mystery, can be more impenetrable than animals (i.e., only a person can have secrets!), but also—in the measure she loves you and opens up to you—she can welcome you into herself and share herself with you at a much deeper level. But the woman can’t (and will never be fully able to) be a substitute for the inexhaustibly rich world of qualities proper to the animal kingdom, qualities that in the very moment in which they make a certain animal more distant, at the same time open up the beholder to horizons of endless transcendence. To be “friend” of the eagle means for the child to be sure that “one day I will fly too, and I will fly through you and with you: you will lift me up to the sky.” Tomorrow the child will “refer” these words metaphorically/spiritually to his first girlfriend. But—perhaps—they won’t have the same “literal power,” the same “primordial” power that they had in his heart and imagination when he was still a little child.

In this way, there is a sense in which even the grown man still needs the eagle and the mare. He still needs to pass through the eagle in order to fully understand the woman, no less than he needs the woman in order to spiritually and symbolically integrate in

his actual experience—that is, as opposed to just in his imagination or dreams—the promise enfolded in his encounter with the eagle: the promise to fly with the eagle once he will have tamed her; the promise to run with the mare once he will have tamed her. On the one hand, the flight of the young man who falls in love is less real because it is metaphorical, but, on the other hand, it is more real because the promise is no longer just in potency, but is, in a way, actualized. It is not accidental or without importance that the lovers in the Song of Songs cannot reciprocally sing of their beloved but through a metaphorical recapitulation of the qualities proper to animals and plants in the only one beloved.^[2] Indeed, it is in the human beloved that all the images receive their full disclosure. But it is also true that without the experience of the world, which gives the lover/poet the creative capacity of seeing in the Beloved what is visibly not there (i.e., the woman does not fly!), the lover who beholds would actually be unable to see all that he sees in his beloved. To call to mind Dostoyevsky, when Grushenka calls Mitya “my hawk,” she does this because of qualities of his character and behavior that could be perfectly and analytically described using conceptual language. That is, there is something common between the hawk and Mitya Karamazov, and these similar features could be even better described through a plain, non-metaphorical description of him. But what the metaphor does is something more: it does not refer simply to what he already possesses, but—in addition to that—it refers to that which belongs to the animal and which is not properly Mitya’s. No matter how much Mitya’s way of moving is similar to the “swooping-down-on-its-prey” of the hawk, Mitya is not (and will never be), properly speaking, a hawk. He will never “suddenly land” like a hawk does.

All of this shows well the irrepressible nostalgia and almost need to integrate animals into the realm of interpersonal communion, a nostalgia that doesn’t die with the end of childhood.

The central point is this: The similarity between man and woman is greater than between man and animal. Yet this is precisely the reason why the animal can be all the more precious: its greater—even disturbing, sometimes—dissimilarity, better points to the mystery of God’s irreducible Difference. The monster of the sea, for example, opens to the sublime, to the mystery of the utterly indomitable incomparably better than any human other. Here, the scales lean more radically than anywhere else in favor of difference, dis-proportion; here, kinship is felt as almost absent. But this is exactly what makes irreplaceable the encounter with this particular animal, and—similarly—with the whole of the animal kingdom, which is as such closer to man than the lower spheres (e.g., plants, rocks, etc.), but further from man

than the woman. It is here where the secret of the utterly special, all-precious attraction of the child to animals must be found. The mystery of the other, qua same and different, is here infinitely inferior in what concerns the likeness, but in a certain respect superior as to the difference—even when considering the bodily aspect alone.

We therefore must dare say: the child “is initiated”—in a sort of pre-conscious manner—to religious wonder more profoundly by far through the encounter with wild animals than through the encounter with his school playmates. The image of the Mystery qua Mystery is incomparably deeper here precisely because the difference between the child and the animal is incomparably greater. To explain further, since every creature is an image of God, the more a creature is perceived as foreign, wild, untamable and mysterious, the better it makes visible the ungraspable and untamable mysteriousness of God. Of course, without the premise of the primordial relationship with mother and father, this wonder would be turned into distress and horror. However, there seems to be a moment, a *kairos* in the development of human consciousness, in which animals receive a kind of superior enchanting power. And rightly so: because in the animal is visibly represented the utter Difference of the Great Other better than in any “helper like him.” Both person and animal make God present and visible. And the “personal other”—to be sure—represents him with an incomparably greater similitude, since God is a Person (or, more precisely, a communion of Persons). However, the “dissimilar symbol,” the animal, thanks to and not in spite of its dissimilarity, better opens up to another fundamental dimension of the relationship with God: awe in front of His utter Difference. The feeling of the divine distance is, in fact, not less important than that of His closeness in the development of the religious sense. God is the intimior intimo meo. But, even more than that, He is the three times Holy, the One in front of whose face even the Angels cover their eyes with their wings... The sacred authors who gave us the Holy Scriptures knew this very well. And this is why no people shows in the same way as Israel did—simultaneously the deepest sense of God’s utter Transcendence and an incredibly rich repertoire of zoomorphic metaphors to represent Him in His relating to His created partner, as Israel did.

To conclude: If we reflect on the order of creation, we see that for Adam the animal makes God visible iconically in a way that is different from the woman: the animal makes God more visible precisely through those qualities of his that distinguish him from both man and woman. This primordial fact is somehow ever grasped by the child. The eagle flies, the child will never fly. The worm creeps, enters the earth, the child doesn’t. The ibex jumps in such a way that the child will never be able to; but the

child—unlike the adult—doesn't take for granted the renunciation of all these wonderful, different ways of "living in the world" that the animal world reveals. He doesn't forsake the wonder that these creatures elicit. He doesn't experience this as simply foreign, having nothing to do with him because he is human. The process of differentiation is in the child not "only" immature; but also—precisely thanks to this immaturity—more open and yearning for communication and integration. The eagle exists. What a marvel! The Eagle exists and I want her to be MINE, I want to be ONE with HER, I want to be LIKE her, even though I understand I am just a child... and I will never be an eagle...but behold: if I talk to her, if we become friends, if I tame "her," maybe one day I will fly on her back; I will fly one day with you. You, one day, will take me to Heaven with you... (cf. Deuteronomy 32:11)!

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[1] Song 1:9: "To a mare of the Pharaoh's chariotry, / I compare you, my love..."

[2] Cf. Song 1:9.15; 2:8-9; 2:14.17b; 4:1.1b.2.5.8b; 5:2;5:11; 5:12;6:5-6;7:4; 8:14

Adam's Gift: Man in the Order of Creation

DEBORAH SAVAGE

Our aim in this essay is to understand the nature of our relationship to non-rational animals. These include the untamed and the domesticated, those we hunt and those we raise for food, those we watch from a distance and those we curl up with at night. Our question is concerned with our responsibility for these our fellow creatures—and what rights, if any, we have over them. Though we will make our way to a more theoretical account, our starting place is a recent archaeological discovery—insights from an event that took place 45,000 years ago.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) reported this spring that, in January of this year, Russian scientists published a remarkable paper in the journal [Science](#). The paper documents their discovery of the remains of an ancient woolly mammoth—a young bull in his prime—in the Siberian Arctic. Their investigation revealed that the creature's injuries, both those that caused his death and those inflicted afterwards, could only have been at the hands of men.

Now for the scientists, what is remarkable about this discovery is the fact that it provides rare documentation of the presence of humans in the Arctic at least 10 millennia earlier than previously thought. But of greater interest to us is what it demonstrates about the men who brought the giant creature down.

The evidence reveals that there was more than one hunter, a group of men who banded together to take down an animal perhaps ten times their size. They used tools—spears and knives—very likely fashioned from the bones of other animals they had hunted and killed previously. Their thrusts were targeted, meaning they already knew the vulnerabilities of their prey. They had to have moved with speed, dexterity, and strength, for the quarry was itself clearly on the move. They butchered the animal, leaving nothing useful behind to go to waste. And we know that they must have journeyed with the herds of woolly mammoths as the huge beasts migrated north in search of food. The men were hungry—and so were their families. Though members of the animal kingdom themselves, they were fighting for survival in an unforgiving environment. What they lacked in brute force, they made up for in superior

intelligence and clever hands. As the WSJ writer put it: "... this too is our legacy: a band of men subduing a huge threatening beast to feed their families. Brilliant, skillful and bold."

Now to modern ears, the assumption that it had to be a group of men who attacked the mammoth sounds patently sexist. No doubt someone is protesting: hey, but what about the women? Surely they hunted too. And surely they did. But only a foolish ideologue would insist on women's "rights" and equal opportunity at such a moment. The men were responsible. They were stronger, they were equipped, and they were courageous. They were fulfilling their duty. They were intent on insuring the subsistence of their families. Surely, we can be confident that, when the men returned with enough food for the tribe, the women looked up from the hearth in relief and gratitude. It is a moment frozen in time that gives us a peephole through which to observe the essential role that men have played in the survival of the species, an aspect of the story to which we will return. But first, it reveals the nature of our relationship to the animals.

Consider the following perhaps startling and arguably self-evident claim. It has been referred to as "the human fact."^[i] It is illuminated in the first instance by the fundamental recognition that man qua man— homo—is the only creature in the animal kingdom that is manifestly not naturally suited to his environment.^[ii] Though like all the animals, he must eat in order to live, homo has had to discover and invent the means by which to ensure the accessibility of adequate nourishment. He does not have a highly developed sense of smell that would help him to find food or sense immediately that the food he has spotted will likely make him sick or could even lead to his death. He does not have claws that would permit him to kill his prey easily with his bare hands. He does not have a prominent snout equipped with fangs that would allow him to attack and devour his prey that way. In order to accommodate his own limited capacity for mastication and the requirements of his digestive system, he needs to cook the meat, grind and bake the wheat, boil the corn. Though he must survive the same vicissitudes of weather and climate, unlike the other animals, he does not have fur that might protect him from the elements. Unable to see in the dark, his biological rhythms and his search for food and shelter are governed by the rising of the sun.

These are just the facts. St. Thomas Aquinas himself refers to them in his argument that the human soul is fittingly united to the human body. How could it be right, says the objector, that that most perfect of souls, the human soul, should be united to so imperfect a body? After all, the bodies of other animals are naturally provided with

covering instead of clothes, with hoofs instead of shoes, with claws, with teeth, with horns. But the human body is deprived of such protections. This means we must conclude that the soul is not properly united with the human body, does it not?

On the contrary, says Aquinas, man's protection is found through the operation of his reason and the work of his hands, both of which make it possible for him to create for himself instruments of an infinite variety, for any number of purposes. Man's protection is of his own making. And this is so because of what is unique to him: he has the power of reason, the capacity to fashion the tools he needs, and the freedom to exercise both of these powers in the service of his own good.^[iii]

It is thus the very embodiment of man qua man (not qua male) that called for the discovery of fire and the fashioning of tools. It is precisely his particular status as creature, unique to him among all the animals, that required him to learn to hunt and eventually to raise his fellow—though lower—creatures for their superior strength and their meat, to construct shelters, make clothing, and plant, harvest and store food in anticipation of the time when there would be none. He has no choice but to speculate about what might be needed, to think ahead, to plan, to anticipate.

It is within this context that man's relationship to the animals must be comprehended. First, it is manifestly clear that the principle that legitimates our use of the goods of creation—animals in particular—is grounded in the recognition that without them, human flourishing would not be possible. It is the primordial fact that has driven man's use of the earth and, as we well know, the excesses that have tended to characterize it. In his relentless push for a continual improvement in his standard of living, man arrives at the flash point of contemporary disputes concerning our relationship to the animal kingdom, an equally important truth that must be acknowledged simultaneously with the first. But here we must go further back in time, to the beginning.

Though primordial, the account of the mammoth hunters with which we began is not the whole story for it illuminates but one aspect of our relationship to animals. This accidental discovery is but a silhouette hidden within an even more ancient tale: the timeless story of the creation of the world. And it points to the genius of man—an unambiguous example of Adam's gift, revealed to us in the book of Genesis—and the meaning of the fall from grace.

Let me explain.

It is now fairly common knowledge that Pope St. John Paul II points to the two creation accounts found in Genesis 1 and 2 as the starting place for his understanding of the relationship of man and woman. And by now, most have heard of his convictions concerning the existence of a feminine “genius,” something he describes as the natural orientation toward persons, characteristic of all women. The late Holy Father’s work in this regard is a gift to the world, its wide dissemination one of the many fruits his papacy. It is no accident that he has been referred to as the “feminist Pope.”[\[iv\]](#)

But perhaps out of a recognition of the need for an unequivocal affirmation of women and their place in life and culture, arguably quite timely at this point in history, John Paul left out of his account any mention of the existence of a masculine “genius.” Though—oddly—mostly overlooked, this is clearly a lacuna in the tradition that begs to be filled. And I believe we can discern its contours by returning to those same passages in Genesis. More to the point here, a brief sketch of what might constitute the genius of man—of vir, that is, the male of the species—provides direct insight into our questions in this essay. For the creation account found especially in Genesis 2 illuminates the nature of his relationship to the created order. [\[v\]](#) A closer look will shed light on the deeper significance of the prehistoric achievement of the men in our ancient tale.

Let’s consider first the notable fact that the man is (apparently) in the Garden alone with God for some period before the appearance of woman.[\[vi\]](#) Here I would point us toward an important truth: it certainly can be said that, aside from his special relationship with the Creator, man’s first contact with reality is of a horizon that otherwise contains only lower creatures, what we might call “things.”[\[vii\]](#) It is this very fact that leads God to conclude that the man is alone, and ultimately leads to the building of woman.[\[viii\]](#)

But the heart of the matter is found at Genesis 2:15–23. Here we learn that the man’s place is in the midst of the created order and, further, that his task is to care for it. He is put in the Garden to till it and to keep it. Though it is not insignificant that, in Genesis 1, both woman and man are instructed to “fill the earth and subdue it” and to have dominion over the earth, in this second, more concretely personal account, only vir is given a specific task. And his task is to work, to care for the things found in God’s creation. This becomes more evident when we consider that, as God searches for a partner for the man, He brings to him all the animals, indeed all the things of creation, to see what he will name them. And, one by one, the man gives each a name,

that is, he takes dominion over them.

Now, in order to name things well and, in so doing, have true dominion over them, man would have to gain some kind of direct knowledge of them; he would have had to have acquired a certain familiarity and sophistication with things. Indeed, Aquinas himself goes so far as to state that man had to have been given a distinct preternatural gift to make the task given to him by his Creator possible.^[ix] It is here that we come to the core of what I propose is man's genius: as the narrative unfolds in Genesis 2, *vir* learns that he excels at discovering what things are, how they are to be distinguished from one another, and what they are for. In fact, it could be said to provide a point of departure in Scripture for the well-documented evidence, affirmed by both science and human experience, that men seem more naturally oriented toward things than toward persons.^[x] This is his gift.

From this analysis, we are justified in proposing at the very least that man's capacity to name things, to determine what can and cannot be said of something—accompanied by the ability to arrive at a systematic way of making judgments about it—constitutes the special gift that men bring to the tasks of human living.^[xi] When considered along with the fact that the man's mission is to work in the Garden, to care for God's creation, we are able to draw a further conclusion: that the genius of man is found in his capacity to know and to use the goods of the earth in the service of authentic human flourishing, an orientation that must include the recognition that the goods of the earth have more than mere utility. They also possess their own inherent integrity and beauty.

Thus, it is equally important to point out that the first man's capacity to know and use things does not mean that he is only oriented toward things. In truth, his first contact with reality includes the Lord God. He is, in the first instance, aware that, of all the animals, he is singularly "alone" before God, and he is truly marked by that relationship forever after. It is within this context that he encounters the woman. Until the woman is brought to him, both to name and to love as he can love no other, he has no "other" like himself. He knows immediately that the woman is not a thing; she is a person. Without hesitation he declares that she is "flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones." And, while he can and does name her, he knows he cannot have dominion over her in the same way he has over the animals. She represents for him his highest good, the greatest gift God has given him and, as a consequence, the value of all the rest of creation is suddenly reordered. From and through his encounter with the woman, the Lord God reveals to him the nature of the reciprocal relationship of the gift of self. And he must realize as well that his own gift—that of caring for and

using the goods of creation—is a gift to be exercised in service to her authentic good.

The significance of this gift is highlighted in dramatic ways when we consider where we began. The pinhole provided by our prehistoric tale confirms the fact that humanity now lives in an alien environment; the story of the fall and our exile from the Garden reveals how it occurred. No longer “at home,” Adam’s genius will now be called on forever after in his struggle with creation. Only burdensome toil and the “sweat of his brow” will disclose to him the intelligence hidden in the order of things. And in the darkness of his intellect, he will forget to pause before the intrinsic integrity and beauty in created things, mistaking them for mere raw material provided solely for his exploitation and use. Nonetheless, at the same time, also unmistakably illuminated is the significance of Adam’s gift—for without it, the human race would not have lived to tell the tale. Properly understood, the particular genius of man has proven throughout history to be an essential gift in sustaining families and creating social order—indeed, it has been the key to the very building up of civilizations.^[xii] We might even say that, without it, we would still be living in caves, afraid to come out.^[xiii] The proper response to men’s achievements is not ridicule, not disdain or resentment, but gratitude.

The human person’s unique status within the hierarchy of the created order does not free us from seeing the unity, truth and goodness in all the rest of creation. In fact, on the contrary, our very nature as the only creature endowed with reason, makes us responsible for seeing it. We must constantly recall that the goods of creation, like persons, have ontological status also. They are created by God, held in existence by God, endowed with a telos that orders them toward a final end according to God’s design. They are an a priori reality, that has been given, a priceless inheritance that we did not create and that is meant for every generation until the end of the world. They are not, therefore, in the first instance, our property, belonging to us in an absolute sense. The proper attitude toward such a gift, therefore, is not greed or exploitation (which is ultimately a self-destructive strategy). On the contrary, what is called for is a profoundly deferential receptivity—a recognition that the gifts of creation must be accepted with both gratitude and respect^[xiv] and a willing acknowledgement of the fact that our task is to care for them. Thus, though the constant moral context of all human action is the fact that the highest value is and always will be the authentic good of human persons—the only creatures created for their own sake—man’s orientation is also an orientation towards the whole of creation. In fact, it is this orientation that makes him most properly their steward. We are called to be stewards of the earth—to till it and to keep it. We misinterpreted the

command to take dominion over the goods of the earth—we thought it meant “control” when what it really means is that we are to serve as its curators. We have both a right to it and a responsibility for it. For the human person does not live in an environment; we live in a created order, a schema that reflects a natural hierarchy and homo is at the meeting place of the material and spiritual realms, responsible for what is below him, to what is above him.

Working together quite literally for centuries, men and women have fashioned for themselves an artificial niche that finds expression in the form of homes, cities, whole nations, and culture itself.^[xv] In fact, everything we refer to as culture was and is the achievement of human reason. Driven in part by the fact that the human person is the only creature who is capable of genuine love and who contemplates his own death, we operate in a world of meaning, of hope and of faith. Culture is ultimately the result of our own search for meaning; it will reflect our conclusions in that regard. But it originates in the fact that man qua man must participate in the achievement of his final end, through, among other things, the fashioning of his environment. It is this power that is to guide his desires and the work of his hands. And it is the male of the species who has been on the front lines of that occupation.

We all owe both the men who have come before us and those who populate our lives in the present moment a debt of gratitude, even if we must also remember that all of us—man and woman alike—are forever under the sway of the effects of original sin. It is the logic of sin that confuses us, that “needs to be broken [so that] a way forward can be found that is capable of banishing it from the hearts of sinful humanity.”^[xvi] But as our faith reveals, self-knowledge is an important weapon in our constant battle with the forces that seek to defeat us. To understand the masculine genius in this way is to equip man with the knowledge he needs to strengthen his own struggle with the effects of original sin, which now can be seen in a new light. For our relationship to the goods of creation, and in particular to the animals, is complex. It calls for discernment of the good they represent, itself a multi-valent notion; it can be useful—but it can also be beautiful.^[xvii] Animals can be useful to man. But they are also creatures with their own inherent goodness and beauty. If our task is not only to till the Garden, but also to “keep it,” it is the fullness of this truth that must be kept in mind.

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[i] M.A. Krapiec, O.P., *I-Man* (New Britain: Mariel Publications, 1983), 29-37.

[ii] For a more comprehensive development of this theme, please refer to my article "Metaphysical Realism as the Foundation of Environmental Stewardship and Economic Development," *Nova et Vetera*, Vol. 10:1 (February, 2012), 233-52.

[iii] Aquinas, ST 1.76.1.

[iv] There are many resources that document the "feminism" of Pope John Paul II. For one particular example, please refer to Mary Ann Glendon's fine essay: "The Pope's New Feminism," *Crisis* 15, no. 3 (March 1997): 28-31.

[v] In fact, I have shown that this passage actually provides a point of departure for an immediate grasp of both the masculine and feminine genius. A fuller account of these claims is beyond my purposes here, but let us at least acknowledge a truth that provides the scaffolding of any discussion of what differentiates the sexes. Though I can only assert this now, this truth is not only accessible to human reason; it is revealed in Genesis 1. And that is that man and woman are manifestly equal. They are both equally human, both in possession of intellect, will, and freedom, both agents in the process of their own becoming. For a fuller account, please see my paper "The Nature of Woman in Relation to Man: Genesis 1 and 2 Through the Lens of the Metaphysical Anthropology of Aquinas," *Logos: a Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, Vol. 18:1 (Winter, 2015).

[vi] Here I need to highlight the fact that I have a somewhat different interpretation of this passage than that of John Paul II in the *Theology of the Body*. There he argues that the reference to man at 2:7 is a reference to man in the abstract or collective sense. But my reading of the text and its use of *ha-adam* to refer "man" in that passage is that it is a reference to a "human being" in this case a man. In the Hebrew, *adam* without the definitive article *ha*, is man in the collective sense; this term is used only in Genesis 1. But when the definitive article is used, it is a reference to a "human being," and, according to the narrative that follows, in this case, one who is male. And indeed, the narrative goes on to reveal that it is from the man's rib that the woman is created. It seems clear from the passage that the reference is to the male at the level of the species. However, it is essential to affirm as well that John Paul is absolutely correct to point out that it is only with the creation of *ishah* (the concretely existing woman we have come to refer to as Eve) that *ish* (the concretely existing man we have come to refer to as Adam) appears. There is no *ish* without *ishah*. See John Paul II, *A Theology*

of the Body, ed. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 158. Some Scripture scholars argue that Genesis 2 must be interpreted in light of Genesis 1 where ha-adam is used at one point. But I am looking at Genesis 2 both in light of the clear meaning of the narrative and Genesis 3 where it is clear that man and woman receive different consequences for their fall from grace, an indication that their particular charism, something unique to each of them, will now be a source of pain and confusion.

[vii] At this point in the narrative, Gen 2:8-10, ha-adam is placed in the Garden and the Lord God makes “to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food,” including the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[viii] In contrast, it can be said that woman’s first contact of reality is of a horizon that contained man. While Adam’s first experience is of loneliness for another like him, Eve’s first experience is of a world of persons. For from the moment of her creation, Eve’s horizon contains persons and she is governed by that contact ever after. I argue that this, rather than, as John Paul argues, motherhood per se, provides the first point of departure for grasping the genius of woman.

[ix] St. Thomas Aquinas does argue that Adam received an additional preternatural gift, infused knowledge, in order to be able to name all the animals brought before him (Summa Theologiae I, Q. 94, a. 3). And though it is from an entirely different tradition, I find it so interesting to consider that one of Lao-Tze’s more famous aphorisms is: “The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their right names.”

[x] See especially *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 18.

[xi] Anthony Esolen, [An Interview with Zenit](#). Though Professor Esolen admits he doesn’t exactly have a theory, his thinking is very helpful. He adds: “Without this literal ‘discernment,’ I mean the clear separation of what may be predicated of a thing and what may not, with systematic means for judging the matter, there can be nothing so intricate as law, the government of a city, higher learning, a church—not to mention philosophy and theology.”

[xii] Even a well-known mainstream feminist seems to agree with this point. See Camille Paglia, “It’s a man’s world and it always will be,” [Time Magazine](#), December 16, 2013: “if it weren’t for men, we would still be living in grass huts.”

[xiii] There is an interesting connection to be made and explored between this aspect of the genius of man and Angelo Cardinal Scola’s argument that the father introduces the child to the “law of exchange (work) as the law of growth in life.” See Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 242.

[xiv] Christopher Franks, *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas’s Economic Teachings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), Chapter 1. Though Aristotle

would not have had a notion of creation per se, Professor Franks points to Aristotle's awe of the unexplained pre-existence of the world and his acknowledgement of the fundamental "deferent dependence" human beings have on it. Franks argues that Aquinas's own economic teaching is grounded in this deferential receptivity and our "ontological poverty" before it.

[xv] Krapiec, 31.

[xvi] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Letter to the Bishops on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World," 8.

[xvii] Aquinas tells us that from the higher and more universal point of view, the good has three aspects: the good as virtuous, the good as useful, and the good as pleasurable. Everything is good in so far as it is desirable and it is the term or end toward which the appetite moves. But this end can present itself in three ways. It can be an end that is absolute in that it is desired for its own sake, as, for example, the Beatific Vision, or the natural desire to live. This is the good in its virtuous aspect. Or, it can be relative to some other end, that is, a means to an end, like food which is taken in order to sustain life. This is the good as useful. Finally, it can be an end in which the appetite comes to rest in the thing desired. This is the good as pleasant. Cf. Aquinas, ST. I.5.6.

On David Bentley Hart and the Peaceable Kingdom

MARY TAYLOR

In the end, it comes down to metaphysics (as all things do).[i]

~David Bentley Hart

Introduction

There was quite a kerfuffle a couple of years ago over whether or not Pope Francis said that animals went to heaven, a rumor that went viral following a New York Times story headlined “[Dogs in Heaven? Pope Francis Leaves Pearly Gates Open.](#)” That story revived an earlier one, in which St. John Paul II was thought to have said that “the animals possess a soul...man, created by the hand of God, is identical with all other living creatures.” [ii] The two points—animals in heaven and animal souls—are clearly related, for what David Bentley Hart calls the “argument against puppies in paradise” follows from premises he rejects: that “the final vision of God must be entirely an experience of the rational intellect, and that animals entirely lack a rational soul.” [iii]

We will return to those premises. First, though, we must note that both popes were wildly misrepresented. An Italian newspaper had claimed that it was Paul VI who said, “One day we will see again our animals in the eternity of Christ,” [iv] not Pope Francis, and the Times retracted their story, though by then it was too late. And John Paul II did not say that man was “identical with” but rather “appears in solidarity with” other living beings. Psalm 104, he noted, “poses no distinction between men and animals,” but that was in regard to their creation, the “breath of life,” which all creatures receive from God, and without which they die; it does not follow that they have souls that are “identical” to human souls.[v] Both popes have taken great pains to insist on Catholic teaching that the human person is unique in all creation, made, like nothing else, in both the image and likeness of God.

The Question Remains

Still, questions about the nature and destiny of animals persist. An example drawn from my own experience as a very young child might give a hint as to why. I had a very happy childhood—God’s in His heaven and all’s right with the world, as Browning said. My nightly prayers were an Our Father or a “Now I lay me down to sleep” followed by “God bless mommy, God bless daddy,” and perhaps a request for a specific birthday or Christmas present. That is, until the day I lost my cats. We had too many pets in the house, and so my beloved Demon and her three gray kittens, Dusty, Misty, and Smoky, had to go.

I was overwhelmed by loss and grief, two things I had never known before. Some would see this as childish sentimentalism, but no mere sentimentalism could have had such profound effects. The formerly opaque Garden of Eden story suddenly split wide open and the light of meaning poured out: all was not right with the world; the world was somehow bent, broken in some mysterious way. At that moment, my prayer life radically changed; I intuited that God was neither a magician nor a cosmic vending machine dispensing impossible wishes, so I did not pray for my cats’ return. Instead, I understood suddenly that prayer was for others’ best good, and I poured out my heart (for years!) that my cats would be warm, safe, fed, loved by their new families, whoever they might be.

I also understood, with innumerable others who have loved their cats or dogs or other animals, that the bonds I had with my pets were special. I did not know the terms, but I knew that the relationships were not merely utilitarian; they were forms of giving that were mutual and reciprocal, flowing from an excess of love rather than simply a need or lack. Of course this was at the time very simple and inchoate, but it was my first intuition of the Theology of Gift, that every good gift reflected the abundance of God’s self-giving love.

There were losses that followed, greater by many orders of magnitude, but this was the first, as it is for many children. Adults might be tempted to say, “Pets die. Get over it,” but children find it hard to believe that the destiny of their cats or dogs or horses is simply decay, and that their purpose is little more than an instrumentalist means of teaching responsibility. Reality intrudes: the grief is very real, the love of an animal may be a child’s first real love outside of himself and his parents, and the thought of heaven without the beloved companion prompts many to say, “Then I don’t want to go there!” (One thinks of the parable of the father who, when asked for bread, does not give his child a stone.) None of this constitutes an argument, of course, but it does give a glimpse as to why the question won’t go away.

The Minor Premise

We now return to Hart's rejected premises, beginning with the minor premise. The classical/medieval picture of living things is that of the vegetal, animal, and rational souls.[vi] Hart says if one affirms "a particularly crude version of the...picture of animate life," holding that the only way to guarantee human uniqueness is to segregate the three into "strictly impermeable compartments," with an "impenetrable partition" between rational and animal soul, then it follows that

one cannot regard the hierarchy of the nutritive, sensitive, and intellectual capacities of a rational being as anything but a composite series of suppositions and superpositions; then the rational soul is simply "something other" than all other aspects of natural life, inhabiting the physical world like a Cartesian ghost or angelic metac (an unsettlingly gnostic picture). (VME)

Poisoned by centuries of dualism, some people can imagine nothing other than this "gnostic picture." The soul seems to be something extra, something "added on," and there is no intrinsic relationship between physical nature and rational nature, with animals excluded from the latter. It is understandable, Hart thinks, that some Christians adopt this view; they fear that by allowing animals even the most elementary participation in rationality, or perhaps any consciousness at all, we make humans indistinguishable from animals.

So, "in order to affirm the uniqueness of humanity within organic nature, as well as the unique moral obligations it entails, we... reject all evidence of intentionality, reason, or affection in animals as something only apparently purposive" (VME). That is, we make animals at worst into mechanisms, or at best into creatures that operate only by "instinct," which Hart calls "the most egregiously vapid of philosophical naturalism's mystifications" (VME). However, trying to avoid the reduction of persons, we open the door to that very reduction: "Concede that a dog's love is really only 'instinct' masquerading as love and, surprisingly, you will find you cannot prevent others from concluding that human love is just a more elaborate variation of the same phenomenon" (VME).

This is, of course, precisely what happened: an "incessant torrent of biological and bioethical theory [has been] extended to human behavior as well" (VME), with reductive explanations of all human acts, including love, to "selfish genes" or the release of oxytocin in the brain, or some other evolution-generated reductive

obfuscation. In the end, dualism does not protect the person, but soon collapses into the identity it was meant to avoid.

For John Paul II, animals are like humans in some ways (metaphysically in the participation in the gift of esse, being, and theologically in the shared love God has for all His creation) and unlike them in others (such as the gift of the Holy Spirit, breathed into the Apostles after the Resurrection). Hence there is, as we quoted above, a “solidarity,” not absolute difference or absolute identity, between them.[vii] For those Catholics worried about this dilemma of identity and difference, an elucidation of the issue comes down to three words: Fourth Lateran Council. That Council famously said, “Between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater dissimilarity cannot be seen between them.”[viii] This is the heart of analogical thinking (in the ontological, not rhetorical, sense) rather than univocity or equivocity.[ix] Can this analogy—applied originally to the relation between persons and God—be applied to the one between persons and animals, so as to preserve both the unique status of persons and their deep and intrinsic relationship to animals?

Our analogical similarity with animals, says Hart, is readily apparent:

Our experience of the animals with whom we live is that they exhibit behaviors similar to many of our own; that those behaviors clearly seem to be signs of emotional and mental qualities familiar to us from our own knowledge of ourselves; that animals possess distinctive individual traits, characteristics that are irreducibly personal (even if we feel obliged to recoil from that word on metaphysical principle), their own peculiar affections and aversions, expectations and fears; that many beasts command certain rational skills; and that all of this makes some kind of natural appeal to our moral sense.... It seems a cruel impoverishment of our speculative and moral imaginations to dismiss it all as a process of biomechanical stimulus and response, only accidentally resembling the workings of human consciousness.[x]

At the same time, Hart acknowledges the “vast gulf—cognitive, moral, creative, imaginative” that separates humans from animals, “the (unmistakably) exceptional nature of human beings” (VME). And yet, acknowledgement of animal consciousness (nearly impossible to deny) does not threaten that gulf, any more than the acknowledgement of human love, justice, mercy, freedom and reason threaten the ever-greater, infinitely greater, nature of God’s.

The Major Premise

We return now to the major premise. From the observation that animals are indeed conscious, and that we can understand their consciousness analogously with ours (never forgetting the “greater distance”), it still does not follow that animals “go to heaven,” if heaven is defined as a vision of God which is “essentially ratiocinative,” with God as the “Ultimate Concept...indissolubly bound to a capacity for abstraction” (Romans).

But is that definition adequate? Surely not, says Hart. Again, Christians are not gnostics. If we truly believe in the resurrection of the body—the glorified bodies of the new creation—rather than the continued existence of disembodied souls, the beatific vision “must be at once rational, sensible, social, imaginative, creative, and cosmic.” Referencing Nicholas of Cusa, Hart says that creatures see God

precisely by seeing God’s act of seeing all things, and so by participation in God’s knowledge of himself in his Logos....and this must entail, for embodied finite creatures, seeing everything that lives and dwells and is held together in the Logos in its final glory, the whole fabric of creation transfigured and finally made complete. (Romans)

According to Revelation, the whole fabric of creation will be transfigured. In the fullness of time, all things on heaven and on earth will be united in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). Did God simply create rational human souls, with the rest of creation as an inert and temporary backdrop? Does the creation simply melt away into nothingness, like a Maya-like illusion or dream from which we must awaken? If God did not create a world that has a “dependent but real liberty of its own,” says Hart, then He is simply “the totality of all that is and all that happens; there is no creation but only an oddly pantheistic expression of God’s unadulterated power.” [xi] According to what is “literally the only eschatology” to be found in Scripture,

reiterated again and again, from the prophets, through the Gospels, right to the end of Revelation, salvation is cosmic in scope and includes all creation; ... the promised Kingdom of God will be nothing but this world restored and transfigured by the glory of God, in its every dimension, vegetal, animal, rational, and social; and ... a deified humanity will serve therein as a cosmic priesthood, receiving that glory from Christ and mediating it to the natural world. (Romans)

Revelation points to a “new heaven and new earth,” and the vision Hart describes was known to patristic and medieval theology. For Maximus the Confessor, “the human

being is the great ‘methorios’ (both boundary and medium) between the material and spiritual orders, the priest of creation and so the microcosm in whom created nature is summed up and joined to the spiritual realm” (VME); for Aquinas the human soul is the horizon between eternity and time, the corporeal and incorporeal.[xii]

Without denying that both the human person’s relation to, and vision of, God is truly unique, Hart does not allow that vision to be reduced to a purely rational contemplation, but broadens it to include animals and all creation, in keeping with the Orthodox “motif of the redeemed cosmos as the burning bush: pervaded by the divine glory, but unconsumed—an infinitely realized theophany” (Romans).

Conclusion

I do not know what heaven is like (and I am in good company with Isaiah, and later St. Paul, who said “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”[xiii]). What I do know is that while all of creation reveals traces of the Trinity,[xiv] only human persons are made in both the image and likeness of God.[xv] Whether animals “go to heaven”—that is, participate in “seeing God” in some analogous sense (qualitatively different from the human person’s beatific vision, yet proportional to their own being), or whether they merely “go to heaven” simply as part of the restoration of creation, I do not know. And so I end as Hart does in *Vinculum Magnum Entis*:

I would rather defer the question to the end of days, when creation will be restored in the Kingdom, shadows in mirrors will yield to the light of clear knowledge, and (so I am reliably informed) the lion will lie down with the lamb.

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[i] David Bentley Hart, “Vinculum Magnum Entis” (hereafter VME), *First Things* (April 2015).

[ii] John Paul II, *General Audience*, 10 January 1990. This translation (“identical”) appears in numerous places on the Internet, although the speech itself is not translated into English on the Vatican website.

[iii] David Bentley Hart, “Romans 8:19–22” (hereafter Romans), *First Things* (June 2015).

[iv] “Il Paradiso è aperto a tutte le creature,” *Corriere della Sera* 27 November 2014. The newspaper does not give a source for Paul VI’s quote.

[v] “Altri testi, tuttavia, ammettono che anche gli animali hanno un alito o soffio vitale e che l’hanno ricevuto da Dio. Sotto questo aspetto l’uomo, uscito dalle mani di Dio, appare solidale con tutti gli esseri viventi. Così il Salmo 104 non pone distinzione tra gli uomini e gli animali quando dice, rivolgendosi a Dio creatore.”

[vi] The “three souls” comes from Aristotle, through Aquinas. In the person, the lower souls are caught up in the higher rational soul, but for animals the reverse is not true. There are different interpretations of what this means. Is the barrier an absolute dualism, so that animals have NO rationality whatsoever, or is there a broader meaning of “reason” that makes possible a non-dual, distinct yet connected, polar relationship? No one argues that animals engage in third-order logic, or think metaphysically. There is voluminous scientific literature on the nature of animal intelligence; in addition, no one who has lived with a beloved pet would call the ascription of some form of intentional or rational behavior mere wish-fulfilling projection, let alone dismiss it as Pavlovian salivating. The sheer number of these stories of animal decision-making—as well as affection, loyalty, heroic acts, and even sacrifice—means the possibility has crossed line from anecdotal to plausible. What Hart rejects is not the metaphysics of Aquinas, but rather a specific form of post-Enlightenment Thomism he saw as creating an absolute distinction between a “pure nature” and grace. He does not think that these “Thomists believe in a mechanistic view of animal life, or Cartesianism” but rather that their views of both of eschatology and of animal intelligence are “at best incomplete, at worst aberrant” (Romans).

[vii] See aforementioned “Dogs in Heaven? Pope Francis Leaves Pearly Gates Open.” We can enter into solidarity with animals because solidarity means linking up two things that are distinct and different, but at the same time have commonalities that enable them to come together. Like covenantal relations, solidarity is a unity that depends on difference.

[viii] Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Nicaea I to Lateran V, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington: Georgetown University Press 1990), 232.

[ix] Hart’s fullest discussion of analogy is in his book, *The Beauty of the Infinite* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), especially chapter 4, section iii, “The Analogia Entis,” which is highly recommended. A succinct description occurs in

Steve McGrath's *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the God-Forsaken* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 223: "The revelation of a God who is wholly discontinuous with ontology is... a 'no' to human knowledge and culture. Aquinas' *analogia entis*" is intended to avoid this one-sided position by affirming a basic if ineffable continuity between the being of creation and the being of the Creator. At the same time the analogy maintains the infinite difference between the created and the uncreated, and thus also avoids the pitfalls of the opposite extreme, the rationalism that makes God continuous with created ontology and transparent to human reason."

[x] **VME**. Hart does not think it necessary to defend "the (unmistakably) exceptional nature of human beings" by disabusing children of the notion that that animals experience anything analogous to human emotions, motives, or needs." As Robert Spaemann says, when we predicate words like "suffering" or "joy" of animals, "these are not bare equivocations. They give a firmer purchase to our understanding of those creatures' situations than any other words could" (*Persons: The Difference Between "Someone" and "Something"* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 125).

[xi] David Bentley Hart, *The Doors of the Sea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 91.

[xii] See *Summa Contra Gentiles* Book II, Ch. 68 par. 6 and Ch. 81 par. 12.

[xiii] Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

[xiv] Aquinas, *ST I*, Q.45, Art.7; Augustine, *De Trin.* vi, 10.

[xv] "Every created thing is made in the 'image' of God, in the sense that it forms an analogy. But a true 'likeness' is something more than analogy. To be in the likeness of God something must participate in the dynamic relationship of Son to Father and Father to Son in the Holy Spirit. The realization of this likeness to God, which is the final perfection of our nature, depends on the use we make of our freedom with the help of grace," Stratford Caldecott, "Creation as a Call to Holiness," *Communio* 30, no. 1 (2003): 161-167; here at 166.

Requiem for the Hound of Heaven

LÉONIE CALDECOTT

This article first appeared in [The Catholic Herald](#).

Truffle was our family dog for a little over fourteen years. A liver and white cocker spaniel from working stock, he was larger than most members of his breed. Having been the runt of his large litter, he gave us no choice when it came to choosing him. Our ten year old daughter sat down, rapt in puppy heaven, to discern among the wriggling contenders, and Truffle, his eyes barely open, crawled over to her and started to lick her hand. She picked him up, and he went to sleep in her arms: love at first snore. His mother's owners moved the other puppies down the feeding line to give Truffle the best milk, and he put on a huge growth spurt, outstripping all his brothers and sisters.

Before I go on, I should say that I am writing this in order to assuage the pain of holding him as he was finally put to rest. Gone was the bouncy rascal that justified his kennel-club sobriquet "Mask of Zorro," and in his place had come, long after we expected it, a shuffling old hound suffering from complete incontinence. The dog that had lit up a little girl's life, caused no end of trouble with his importunate habit of hounding all and sundry for snacks, and finally been a hugely comforting presence to us during five difficult years, had reached the end of the road.

I am fully aware, pace St. Thomas, that animals do not have rational souls. However, being English and a purveyor of the empirical method, I have to conclude that dogs, at least, have souls of a different kind. They have irrational souls, located in their tummies. Nothing that lodges in the digestive system could possibly be called rational. But that doesn't mean there isn't something here which inheres in the supra-physical, even supernatural plane. As my husband used to say, animals play a role in the rich tapestry of creation which surely cannot be obliterated in the sands of time. This is particularly true of those family pets who have interacted in many and mysterious ways with their owners - or 'their humans,' as the politically-correct prefer to call it. Not that a dog cares for political correctness: that's more of a feline thing. A dog just cares for you. His love is unconditional. He is a harbinger of grace: a divine wink that

says 'all shall be well, all manner of thing'. With one wag of his tail the dog wipes away misery. With one illicit application of his over-large paws he marks you out as worthy. He tolerates no scruples when it comes to your place in the pack.

I like to say that it was our dog who taught me to pray. Hold a tasty treat up in front of a sitting dog, watch his or her eyes glue themselves to the target, and you know what I am talking about. Total attention, incapable of distraction, moves the canine head in sync with your hand. If we fastened the eyes of our souls with half as much determination on the person of Christ, we'd all be saints. Next time you go to Eucharistic Adoration, your marthaesque head full of teeming distraction, just pretend to be a dog. The Creator made these creatures for a reason.

After all, what did Our Lord do, in order that we might keep close to him? He could have chosen anything to make a repeatable sacrament for our journey. He chose food and drink. He has a mind to sanctify us even through our gullets. For all our angelic aspirations, the beast on survival mode is also a part of our nature. And so the physical world becomes the playground of the divine, something that CS Lewis captured perfectly in the Narnia stories. God uses everything: the fruit of the resplendent earth, and the work of the opposable thumbs that mark us out as human. He enters into the bridal chamber of the New Covenant through the most obvious door: our insatiable hunger.

Scientists have discovered that dogs know how to read the emotion on a human face. Why do we ourselves so often fall beneath the capacity for empathy of a dumb, and potentially rapacious, beast? I used to look inside the mouth of our dog and wonder at those huge canines. I would reflect on the way mankind at some point in pre-history invited wolves to sit on our side of the fire, to become part of our pack, to hunt with us, to protect our young. God gave man the task of naming the animals. We name some of them friends. And in return they remind us of what truly matters.

Paradoxically, by being the beasts they are, they remind us what it is to be human.

Léonie Caldecott is the UK editor of both *Humanum* and *Magnificat*. With her late husband Stratford she founded the Center for Faith and Culture in Oxford, its summer school and its journal *Second Spring*. Her eldest daughter Teresa, along with other colleagues, now work with her to take Strat's contribution forward into the future.

In the Eye of the Beholder: A "New" Way to Study Animals

RACHEL M. COLEMAN

Portmann, Adolf, *Animal Forms and Patterns: A Study of the Appearance of Animals* (Schocken Books, 1967).

As children, we are fascinated by animals: the little bugs on the sidewalk, the squirrels in the trees, the dogs we meet on the street. What little child hasn't had a favorite animal, some creature with which he or she becomes fascinated, and for which he or she has great affection? How many times have you seen a child stop in his tracks in order to observe a slug in the garden, or a worm on a sidewalk after it rains? This intrigue with our creaturely neighbors seems entirely natural: children have an inborn love of animals.

And yet, flash-forward ten-odd years in a child's life to high school biology, and this wonder and awe for our fellow creatures has waned. Not many of my classmates cited biology as her favorite subject—in fact, almost none did; and I am certain that my experience in this area is not unique. Could it be that the way we study animals, or approach the very subject of biology, is flawed? Intuitively, we expect that biology, the study of life (βίος, in the Greek), would build on our natural childlike fascination. Yet, this is not normally the case. The formal study of life more often begins with cells and their parts, the so-called “building blocks” of life, rather than the study of the wholes that in fact are alive. Though not the case for everyone, this switch tends to repel amateurs—and I mean this in the literal sense of one who loves. Biology, as with so many of the natural sciences, becomes a realm of expertise; our childlike fascination wanes. And no wonder. When we study parts without first understanding the wholes whence they come, we lose any context for understanding the part. This is to say: we lose the reason the part is interesting in the first place.

Adolf Portmann, a professor of zoology at the University of Basel in Switzerland from 1931 to the late 1970s, offers a radically different approach to the study of animals—one which seems intuitive if we take a minute or two to think about it—but one which

is not often presented as an option. Summarizing the book turns out to be quite difficult for me, a biology amateur, mostly because I find myself wanting to shove the book into the hands of anyone who will take it and say, “Here. Read this. Trust me.” I would forgive any skepticism on the part of my perhaps unwilling audience, given the book’s unassuming title (and even more unassuming subtitle: “a study of the appearance of animals”), but after reading this beautiful and insightful little book, I’d be surprised if others were not also impressed by the joy and delight expressed by the author for his subject. *Animal Forms and Patterns* is a gem of a book that gives its reader the eyes to see a world that has always been open to us, but is too-often ignored.

Given that the book, as its subtitle states, is a study of the appearance, or the morphology of animals, it may surprise the reader to find in it no photographs whatsoever, other than detailed drawings of every animal referenced. Photographs, though worth a great deal, do not necessarily require the observer to stay with a subject as a drawing does. The drawings are indeed indicative of Portmann’s principles: he asks of his reader (and himself) a careful and patient attention to the task at hand, which is first and foremost observation. “To observe,” he writes, “means to study every detail lovingly” (23). This is not poetry, but rather, the “first principle” of Portmann’s scientific method.

Portmann presents his thesis early: the forms of animals are made to be seen, and we should study them with this in mind. We’re not used to thinking about our world in this way for various reasons, but through patient observation and description—through which his clear love of animals and their forms shines—Portmann makes his case. We tend to think of organisms evolving over time with no interaction with or regard for the rest of the world unless through the forces of scarcity and overpopulation, but this hermeneutic tends to leave a lot of questions about animal form and structure unanswered. The fact that all animals are organized in such a way as to be intelligible is not in fact self-explanatory: Portmann remarks that “what is more delicately organized is always in greater danger” (67), and yet, we consider animals more advanced, evolutionarily speaking, if they exhibit more organization, both internal and external. Compare for example, the orca—considered to be one of the smartest animals on the planet—with its fellow ocean-dweller, krill. The orca’s advanced organization—brain, lungs, heart, etc.—could simply be a liability, if the only point of the animal’s existence were to pass on its genes to the next generation, as these higher organizational structures makes it much more vulnerable to injury. Surely krill, with much shorter generations and much less complicated morphological

structures, could be said to beat out the less-efficient killer whale with respect to adaptation and fitness. And yet we all know intuitively that the killer whale is a more advanced animal in every way. Indeed, if “survival of the fittest” were the only force at work in the development of animals, most of the morphological structures we encounter would be entirely unintelligible. To be clear, Portmann is not presenting a denial of the theory of evolution, rather he is suggesting that by interpreting animals first and only through the principles of adaptation and fitness, we will likely miss most of the knowledge and understanding about our world any creature has to offer. The zoologist draws our attention to the sheer aesthetic power of the world we live in, a force often ignored in pursuit of so-called practical knowledge.

A question Portmann asks that seems obvious after he asks it, but probably has never occurred to us: why does the outward appearance of an animal look so radically different from its internal organization? Our innards, as we all know, aren't all that much to look at, but we know this not to be the case for the outward form of almost any animal. It seems, says Portmann, that the outer structure of an animal has been formed with a view toward being seen, whereas the internal organization takes its shape only from the rule of maximum efficiency. Internal structures, especially in the higher animals, do not belong to “the special sphere of what can be seen by the eye” (109). Portmann is suggesting here that the external organization of animals have a largely sematic function—this sematic component is what accounts for the difference between inside and outside in most animals. Another question: why is the contrast between “the outside and the inside” that much greater the more an animal becomes organized? If we pay attention, we see that the higher an animal is on the chain of being, the more contrast there is between its appearance and its internal organization. There is more difference, for example, between the outside of an elephant and its innards than the outside of a jellyfish and its innards. The higher the animal, Portmann suggests, the more it has possession of itself, or its own interior world, which is expressed through its morphology, whereas lower creatures do not possess such interiority and therefore have no need for their outside to be all that different from their inside. Thus, just by paying attention to morphological patterns, we are able to show the difference between an animal having an “inside” and an animal having an “interior life.” The latter is hidden from us unless we have the eyes to see it, while the former is accessible even to the most oblivious of observers. Portmann writes: “we shall perceive that the appearance which meets the eye is something of significance and shall not allow it to be degraded to a mere shell which hides the essential from our glance. We would not wish to be like grubbers after treasure who have no suspicion that the really valuable things can be found anywhere

but hidden away deep in dark places” (35).

Portmann traces morphological patterns up and down the chain of sentient being, and as one reads the book, he slowly and beautifully gives his reader the capacity to see with his eyes, to become attuned to the morphological structures of animals and what they might indicate. The more advanced the animal, for example, the more symmetry the animal has. Even creatures too small for the human eye to see—such as Portmann’s favorites, the sea-dwelling Radiolarians—are organized around some type of symmetry. As we move up to the forms of higher animals, we see a switch to bilateral symmetry similar to humans. This switch that is not, by the way, mirrored in the internal organization of an animal, another piece of evidence that efficiency is not the last say in the animal kingdom. The bilateral symmetry of the higher animals is, it seems, made to be looked at by something (or someone) with two eyes, someone or something that recognizes and can understand bilateral symmetry. “What is made to be looked at, what is apparent to the optic sense, may be formed in a different way from those parts on the body of the same animal which are hidden” (109). Though efficiency does seem to be the standard when it comes to the internal organization of an animal, it is symmetry that rules the day when it comes to its pattern and form. It is indeed symmetry itself, Portmann surmises, that indicates to us that something is alive.

Another striking similarity across the animal kingdom: if the animal has a head, it is almost always the case that its patterning emphasizes this feature. Take a second to think about this: the small house fly, the bearded dragon, the tiger in the jungle—not just different species, but species on entirely different branches of the taxonomic tree—have a similar patterning structure. This emphasis on the head, says Portmann, again suggests the distinctly visible nature of creatures: it is as if these patterns are telling us where to look in order to understand the organism in its entire context, in order to understand the organism as a whole. The head is an animal’s organizing principle; the head shows us, and other creatures, where and how to look at the animal.

All of Portmann’s observations lead him to one main principle: that animal morphology is an expression of the “intensity of living” (108). It is the visible form, meant to be seen, that invites us into the knowledge that there is more to know, that life itself can be known. In other words, it is visible form that allows us to see that there is anything to know at all. And isn’t this what the child intuits, when he stops to watch a bird the rest of us have passed over?

But we should ask the blunt question: who cares? Or more gently: why should we care?

The science of biology has in large part been co-opted by either molecular studies of cells or genetics—both rightful subdivisions of biology, but neither certainly the main component of the study of life. This hostile takeover, I would argue, succeeds only in alienating us from the rest of the world, rather than trying to accomplish the natural end of the natural sciences: knowing and loving the world. Looking at life through the lens of genetics makes us feel as if we are in a world of sterility and precision rather than the vibrant dynamic world in which we actually live.

We do not, however, study the forms and patterns of animals to make us feel less lonely—although there is something to be said for mankind keeping the knowledge of his stewardship for creation foremost in his mind—we also study life to know more about ourselves. The standard argument against the kind of science Portmann proposes is that it is useless, but I reject this thesis, as I think Portmann would. In fact a simply genetic biology in itself is useless, because it gives us no context for any information we may obtain, no way to order it. “Whether we are able to understand the play which is being enacted before our eyes depends upon other requisites than a grasp of the technique of the performance,” writes the Swiss zoologist (164). Seeing the play as a whole helps us to understand our place in it, but for this we must observe the world, lovingly.

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Autistic Insights on Our Fellow Creatures

MELANIE DANNER

Grandin, Temple, *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior* (Simon & Schuster, 2005).

A friend, along with his two horses, volunteered for decades in a hippotherapy program at a school for children with emotional challenges. Another friend grows teary relating how their dog would alert an adult when it detected that their son, who was suffering from leukemia, was going to lose consciousness. Yet a third friend told me of a new program at her library which has children read aloud to a dog. The dog's schedule rapidly fills with children with crippling shyness, dyslexia or other learning differences, and non-native English speakers. Temple Grandin would be pleased. Her book *Animals in Translation* closes with a plea to cherish the animal/human bond and employ animals in innovative ways to benefit from their various gifts. The book, however, is hardly another sentimental look at animals. Take, for example, Grandin's descriptions of the aberrant behavior of "psycho hens," "rapist roosters," and dolphins which "commit gang rape, brutal killings of dolphin 'children,' and the mass murder of porpoises" (151). In fact, Grandin, who holds a PhD in Animal Behavior and has authored several books and over 300 scientific papers, would be anathema to every vegan on the planet since in her own words, "Half the cattle in the United States and Canada are handled in humane slaughter systems I've designed" (7). For her, despite the apparent contradiction between her love of animals and her job in the meat-packing industry, she is serving cattle, hogs, lambs, poultry, etc. by striving to ensure that these animals that are bred by humans for their utility have a decent life and a decent death.

The uniqueness of Grandin's contribution to this field is alluded to in the subtitle. Her understanding passes through her experience of autism, which she argues, is "a way station on the road from animals to humans, which puts autistic people like me in a perfect position to translate 'animal talk' into English" (6-7). Despite the countless fascinating observations on animal perception, feelings, aggression, pain, suffering,

and genius, ultimately, it is the prism of autism that commands the reader's interest. The path she has taken also lends her work credibility: "Because of my own problems, I've always followed neuroscientific research on the human brain as closely as I've followed my own field. I had to; I'm always looking for answers about how to manage my own life, not just animals' lives. Following both fields at the same time led me to see a connection between human intelligence and animal intelligence the animal sciences have missed" (7). This chain of study (typical human brain—autistic brain—animal brain) has not only provided the multitude of insights gathered in decades of field work and academic study shared in this book, it offers promising angles of inquiry in the future.

One of the greatest similarities between the autistic and animal brains is "thinking in pictures" (the title of another of Grandin's books). She explains that her thought processes are all visual, and language enters only at the point of judgment at the end. Being a visual thinker allows Grandin to see things to which normal people are oblivious. Animals, unlike normal people and like autistic individuals, are dominated by what comes through their senses, being exceedingly detail-oriented and unable to filter out details in their environment. The normal human brain engages in massive screening before registering details as worthy of interest; much of what does not fit into expectations based on experience does not make the cut and so does not enter the consciousness, a phenomenon called "inattentional blindness" (25). For this reason, much of Grandin's work has revolved around helping managers of slaughterhouses to notice and correct things that were spooking the animals. By necessity, animals, especially prey animals, remain on high alert and constantly scan their environment for dangers. Being unaware can cost them their lives. The autistic brain is likewise detail-oriented and on high alert, which is one reason it is so prone to fear and anxiety.

A particularly important insight that autism has given Grandin in her study of animal behavior and in designing facilities for slaughter is that fear is worse than pain. She believes animals being slaughtered should not only experience a painless death but should be handled during the preceding stages in a way that does not stress them. Having experienced so much fear and anxiety herself (especially before starting medication in her 30s), Grandin is sensitive to the "hyper-fear systems" autistic people and animals share because of their less powerful frontal lobes. The frontal lobes in a normal human brain have two important functions to provide coping mechanisms against excessive fear: 1) they act as brakes on the amygdala, the part of the mid-brain that sends out signals to the pituitary to produce stress hormones, and 2) they are

essential in language, which normal people use to process and reduce their fear. Autistic people, who remain much of the time, and (most) animals, which remain all the time, in a sea of raw sensory data unmitigated by language, are far more susceptible to fear. Other factors exacerbate animals' tendency to fear. For evolutionary reasons, fear is contagious; many more animals would die if each waited around to investigate potential dangers itself. Also, their fears are "hyper-specific" since animals do little generalizing (another of the frontal lobes' tasks). They perceive differences more than similarities, and seeing particulars rather than forming concepts about those particulars, many more things appear to them as new and potentially threatening. Once a fear is in place, it is much harder to disarm without the analytical and linguistic capacities larger frontal lobes give a normal person. Grandin relates that she was so completely besieged by anxiety and fear in her teen years that every waking hour felt as stressful as defending her PhD dissertation. Then, she had a moment of revelation while visiting her aunt and uncle's ranch. Watching a panicky cow go into a contraption that squeezed it to calm it for the administration of an injection, she was provoked to build a "squeeze machine" for herself. Her apparatus produced the desired calming effect, and that was her first indication that she shared something important with cattle. In the midst of her terror-filled existence, she reported, "Animals saved me" (4).

Grandin builds a compelling case that human beings need animals not only for food and other products, not only for companionship, but also to help us understand ourselves, whether we are "normal" or not. I cannot help thinking her insights about fear are relevant for people with anxiety disorders, certain brain injuries, and dementia. All people possess the lower instinctive "animal" brain in addition to the upper "human" one, and we sometimes fall back on the lower one (e.g., when we have an amygdala hijack), so it behooves us to understand how the two interact. It is truly wonderful to encounter a book on animal behavior by an autistic person that sheds so much light on the workings of my own brain and the brains of other people, as well as the creatures given to inhabit the planet with us.

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A New Textbook That Starts With Living Wholes

CHRIS HALL

Blum, Christopher O. and Cuddeback, John A., *Nature's Beautiful Order: An Introduction to the Study of Animals Taught by the Classical Naturalists* (Memoria Press, 2014).

Nature's Beautiful Order by Christopher Blum and John Cuddeback is that rarest of modern biology textbooks: one that starts with beauty and then works to facts and figures, rather than the reverse. Through 187 pages and 18 chapters of description, narrative, and relevant writings gleaned from natural historians of note, the authors have crafted a reader that balances knowledge and the narrative, building a framework of facts within the greater calling to "learn how to see again."

Before the term "scientist" was coined by newspapermen in the late 1800s, thereby reducing the endeavor to its technical aspects alone, science had been more accurately described as natural philosophy, the seeking of wisdom in the natural world. Working in tandem were natural science, or the exploration of the physical world through experimentation, and natural history, which explored the natural world through careful observation. Through time, we have gotten used to the methods of natural science as the baseline for biology today, and in the process we have lost touch with the wonder and awe that come from simply spending time immersed in observation of the Book of Nature. We favor the dissection rather than the observation of the living organism, the analysis of the part rather than the consideration of the whole.

In doing so, we have also lost the reference points necessary to find our way back to our place in the cosmos. That word, cosmos, includes the concept of the container, but also the implied order within that container. Aristotle recognized that, in order to begin to make sense of the natural world, it makes sense to start with the things we can perceive with our senses first, at our scale. The order of the cosmos could be seen, reflected, in the classification of living things, starting with parts and proportion, and moving from there to behavior, systems, and functions.

In the chapter “What is an Animal?”, Blum and Cuddeback bring out a gem from St. George Jackson Mivart, a late 19th century natural historian whose wrangles with natural selection and theology make for epic reading. Mivart makes a telling point about studying a cat: “Nothing can be understood by itself. All our knowledge consists of apprehensions which have been acquired by comparing and contrasting one thing with another; and the more we know of any object, the greater is the number of relations we are able to affirm to exist between it and other objects. ...More than this, we should also understand its relations with that part of the creation which is devoid of life—in short, we should understand its place in nature” (13). Rather than take the animal apart, we should study it alive and in context, and then let the questions form that will lead us in new directions of exploration. First and foremost, start with good observation!

The challenge with most biology textbooks is that they start with the cell and work out from there, following lines of extension and extrapolation from the single unit of living organisms to their higher orders and functions. This approach often leaves the budding biologist in a cognitive lurch. The cell is rather abstract. Even when seen under the microscope, even when the names of all the organelles can roll, superimposed, from the mind to the object on the slide, the cell is still a thing of inaccessible scale. It is also a design that can’t stand on its own. It cannot be fully understood without knowing the context in which its function is both implied and dictated.

As the authors point out, even Darwin, who was no fan of Aristotle’s methods, conceded that he was “one of the greatest, if not the greatest, observers that ever lived” (6). Without intending to do so, Aristotle also uncovered something that many biology teachers discover: students relate to what they can perceive, which, being incomplete and therefore mysterious, leads to questions and curiosity that open up further exploration. In this way, the wonder is preserved without losing it to cold dissection. To paraphrase C.S. Lewis’s *Abolition of Man*, when it would explain, it would not explain away, and when it spoke of the parts, it would remember the the whole.[i]

Each section of *Nature’s Beautiful Order* takes the student on an observational exploration of an organism. Starting in the ocean with the lobster, cuttlefish, and sea urchin, the book proceeds to the bee, drawing comparisons and contrasts between the physical and behavioral traits of each organism relative to the others studied so far. From the amphibian frog to the turtle to the Canada goose, the authors extend the

comparisons, and then rest for a few chapters on birds, uncovering the mechanics of flight and migration, bird song, and relationship with humans. Using excerpts from Audubon, students are encouraged to seek out the company of birds in both the wilderness of the woodcutter's story and that of the backyard wilderness that beckons from just beyond the study window.

Following the hierarchy of Creation, the book concludes with two chapters on man. In "Man the Upright Animal," comparisons and contrasts are drawn between all the previous studies and our unique position in God's order. The authors state, and then proceed to draw out through example, that "man truly belongs to the animal kingdom, but he also truly belongs to another kingdom" (175). In "Man the Steward," the authors conclude their work with a call to be grateful. Man has been given dominion, but also the responsibility to work. "It is tilled fields, orchards and vineyards," they say, "that produce food as no un-cultivated land ever does" (185). Bolstered by the admonishment to work by the sweat of our brows, we are called to enter into our role as attentive stewards of this world, and humbly continue our study of God's highest creation: ourselves.

If you adopt Nature's Beautiful Order, I would recommend two companion activities. They will make the journey that much sweeter.

First, get a sketchbook. One way that Louis Agassiz, one of the foremost natural historians of the 19th century, trained his graduate students involved parking them for hours, alone except for a bottle of preserving solution, with a fish. After the clutter of the mind died down, the students inevitably noticed, and then sketched, details of gill and fin, scale and eye that they had missed before. The narrative of this book brings about the longing to see, which can lead naturally to the desire to draw. And not just to draw, but to render: drawing from a depth of observation that seems to come from an exchange of essence between the subject and the sketch. Starting with the seeing, the elements of art enter naturally into the picture, and can transmit through the hand and pencil an act of charity. This kind of soulful study brings new knowledge into resonance with the call to be artists, co-creators, and sets into perspective the lessons of apprenticeship to the Master. The telos, or ultimate end, of any rendering is an encounter with beauty, which was, in the medieval mind, a quality not of an object itself, but a beckoning from behind the object's apparent qualities towards God Himself. Beauty through the eye, charity through the pencil, study through the senses, and wonder through the heart.

Second, develop a dedication to daily encounters with animals and organisms. Not

forced, but simply encounters. Go for a walk and see what lessons God provides. This mindset towards the study will make the underlying lessons of the book stand in relief: natural history is not about experimentation in the lab, but encounters with God's created reality. There is a place for natural science, but not a stand-alone place, nor a place without reference and relation to the deeper connectedness of creation. Stepping out of the pages and into the "lab" of the cosmos will have implications for the way in which the book becomes a part of the student, rather than simply an object of study.

Nature's Beautiful Order is a book that has been sorely needed in science circles for quite some time. It works in very necessary ways upon the fabric of our understanding: we inhabit an ordered world, and we do well to study that world from reference points we know well, our senses first, which will lead us inevitably towards deeper questions about what we perceive. Aristotle may not have known about modern natural science, but he had a firm grasp on the foundations of natural history, and in so doing, he orients us, even through the passing centuries, towards the fullness of a modern natural philosophy.

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[i] C. S. Lewis, *Abolition of Man* (HarperOne, 2015; first ed. 1944), 80–81.

Just How ‘Liberating’ Is Peter Singer’s Liberation of Animals?

DAVID HENDERSON

Singer, Peter, *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement* (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009; first ed. 1975).

The fourth edition of Peter Singer’s influential work, *Animal Liberation*, includes a new preface by the author hailing the many recent victories of the modern animal rights movement in securing concrete benefits and protections for animals. Although such change has come slower than anticipated, and has perhaps not been as extensive as he would like, Singer nonetheless views this prevailing recognition of the rights of animals as a “vindication” of his original, controversial thesis first published in 1975 (x). Indeed, if the 2008 legislation of the Spanish parliament is any indication, then it would seem that contemporary society is at least inclined towards accepting the principal logic of Singer’s argument. This legislation, although non-binding, extended the legal status of personhood to nonhuman hominids on the basis that such animals have the capacity to recognize themselves and express emotions such as love, fear, anxiety, and jealousy. Drafted in support of the Great Ape Project, the Lower House reasoned that because such animals can express individual desire, especially when faced with the experience of pain, then this is sufficient for establishing their protection, with the logic being that such “interested” beings enjoy the same rights to life, liberty, and free exercise as any other such self-determining agent (i.e., human persons). Singer upholds the logic of the Spanish Lower House as one of many “signs” that modern society is at last working to draw animals into the human ethical sphere, thus laying siege to what has been for centuries the “unsurmountable barrier” of human “speciesism” (xiii). In the mind of Singer, contemporary culture is on the cusp of an unprecedented achievement, one that could erase centuries of unjust despotism toward so-called “nonhuman animals” and usher in a new moral order in which “brutes,” too, have rights (1).

The pervasiveness of what Singer calls human “speciesism” is the main contention of the book. Simply stated, “speciesism” is the irrational human bias that upholds the

interests of our own species over and against the interests of all others (6). Singer argues that not only does such a prejudice underlie and falsely justify the widespread mistreatment of nonhuman animals, but that it is also essentially incongruent with the idea of human equality. He reasons that for such an idea to be the basis of a universal human right, it can only be something “moral” that is “prescriptive” of the human person and not “descriptive” in a way limited to some actual characteristic, quality, or requirement (5). Equality, in other words, since it is extended indiscriminately to all human beings regardless of personal capacity or fitness, must spring from the needs or “interests” of all such beings. Pain is pain, Singer elsewhere writes, irrespective of the kind of being who is undergoing it (220). Singer here uses the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham and Henry Sidgwick to argue that the “basic element” of man’s moral assessment is simply the “interest” he displays when moved by some exterior stimulus (5). The capacity to suffer or experience some manner of fulfillment thus acts as a “prerequisite” of human dignity, indicating that the human person is in fact a conscious, living being (17). Singer thus concludes that since animals clearly display behaviors associated with the avoidance of pain and the pursuit of pleasure, they are not then some kind of “unconscious automata” (11), but rather are creatures that fall within the ethical sphere of equality granted to living, thinking, and feeling beings who display corresponding “interests” (19–20).

The ensuing chapters entitled “Tools for Research” and “Down on the Factory Farm” each, respectively, tackle an example of what could be described as institutionalized speciesism. The first presents the grim and appalling world of animals used for scientific research and experimentation, while the second graphically portrays the horrendous state of animal life under the “care” of industrial agriculture. Among the longest and most detailed in the book, these chapters are not for the faint of heart. Each occurrence of brutality that Singer exposes—from the deliberate irradiation and poisoning of dogs and primates by the US Army in the 1960’s and 1970’s, to the merciless, inhumane subjection of animal species to thousands of psychological, pharmaceutical, and chemical trials, to the abhorrent conditions of confinement, restraint, deprivation, and malnourishment that characterize the industrial farming process—represents an example of speciesism that is as vile, cruel, and horrific as the next. If only to further reinforce the nature of this violence, Singer continually highlights what he describes as the “trifling” character of so many of these practices (43). Despite the supposed claim by these institutions that such experiments are in the service of some higher human good, or that such conditions of restraint are necessary for the well-being of the animals, Singer shows time and time again how often these justifications prove unfounded (cf., 40, 97, 105–106). Whether for the sake of some

negligible gain in productivity, or simply to reinforce an already established scientific finding, the inconsequence of so many of these callous practices can only lend further support to the claim that such industries are representative of a broader “conditioned ethical blindness” (71). Clearly, the supposed objectivity in these chapters is ideologically driven, and Singer’s assessment is at times unduly one-sided. Singer makes no attempt, for example, to locate either of these practices within any broader horizon of scientific or industrial activity, and many remarks made throughout the book betray a certain naïveté with respect to the nature of the scientific method or the complexities involved in a modern industrial economy (cf., 92, 160). However, Singer is undoubtedly correct when he says that scientific and corporate attitudes are derived from an objectification and mechanization of animal species that have been conceived in terms of human use (160). The problem, in other words, lies with certain underlying presuppositions concerning ethical practices and the nature of animals, and Singer is for this reason right to insist that it is only by way of a fundamental shift in attitude that any reform of practice is possible (157).

The fourth chapter contains Singer’s much-maligned defense of vegetarianism, which he describes as being a choice of “supreme importance” for it “underpins, makes consistent, and gives meaning to all our other activities on behalf of animals” (159). Singer’s work has for decades been criticized and dismissed for its rather facile and weakly supported insistence that all human beings should be vegetarians (cf., 177–79). However, what is important in this chapter is less this exhortation and more the way in which this issue highlights the ethical “boundary” that Singer is attempting to erect for his reader. The non-killing of animals for the purposes of food is simply the practical expression of the principle that animals ought to be placed beyond the bounds of human control, as though the two were divided by a line (171). As the following chapter makes clear, it is vegetarianism, and its implied equality of animal and human life, that overcomes the long, tragic history of man’s domination and control of animals. This fifth chapter places the blame squarely on Christianity, whose synthesis of ancient Jewish and Greek thought, according to Singer, resulted in the dissemination of the idea of human uniqueness in a way that “depressed” and continued to undervalue the “lowly position” of nonhuman animals (191). Although Singer, albeit hesitantly, admits certain exceptions to this tendency of Christian thought (e.g., Saint Francis, 197–98), he nonetheless accuses Thomas Aquinas of diverting mainstream Christianity toward an “exclusively speciesist preoccupation” (193). Somewhat oddly, the person whom Singer presents as being the culminating figure of this intellectual history of Christian prejudice is René Descartes. Failing to mention his censure by the Church, Singer holds up Descartes as representing a

Christian prioritization of the soul that effectively “absolves” the conscience from any moral concern regarding the consumption of animals or their use in scientific experimentation (200–01). What is perhaps more perplexing is how Singer endorses the philosophers of the Enlightenment as the incontrovertible heroes of this historical narrative (failing to recognize, as he does so, Descartes’ founding role in this intellectual movement). Singer writes that “[t]he tendency of the [Enlightenment] was for greater refinement and civility, more benevolence and less brutality, and animals benefited from this tendency along with humans” (202). Given that the logic and dynamism of modern industrial organization, which entails rearranging an essentially “dumb” world of natural “things” in accordance with the interests of human beings, springs from Enlightenment science, there is an unmistakable discrepancy in Singer’s analysis. This inconsistency is all the more glaring once one realizes that the philosophical school that is supposedly leading a “revolution” of thought toward the liberation of animals from their enslavement is the same tradition responsible for producing the institutions and mechanisms of their oppression (206). Serious questions thus need to be raised as to the quality of this so-called “liberation.”

The unquestionable strength of the book is the way in which it unmask the unconscious presupposition of an objectification of animal life that lies hidden behind the gloss of daily consumerist and dietary choices. Singer thus rightly insists, in his concluding chapter, that animals are not “machines for converting fodder into flesh,” nor are they mere “tools for research” or “lumps of clay whom we can mold in whatever manner we please” (224). Cardinal Ratzinger has said much the same thing when, in response to a question posed on the practice of factory farming, he stated: “this degrading of living creatures to a commodity seems to me in fact to contradict the relationship of mutuality that comes across in the Bible.”^[i] Animals, in other words, become subject to incalculable harm when their lives are reduced to mere “use” in some secondary, derivative, industrial process. As creatures drawn into the conversation between the world and God, animals possess the innate dignity of being living participants in this cosmic interplay. However, it is precisely this Christian sense of “mutuality” and participation that Singer denies, arguing that only if we follow through on the logic of Darwin and “think of human beings as no more than a subgroup of all the beings that inhabit our planet,” does it become possible to elevate the status of other species (239; cf., 206). But such a “liberation” can only ever be that of conflation, one in which the distinctive worth of a nonhuman being is only of “value” inasmuch as it affirms and coheres to an explicitly human, anthropocentric valuation of nature qua interest. However much Singer may be justified in condemning the

unjust domination of animals in the modern period, his proposal would nonetheless expand this oppression to radically new proportions. One need only consider the constant appeal of the book for more “effective” and “benevolent” means of technological intervention in the lives of animals (cf., note Singer’s support of in vitro animal toxicology testing, 58; and his endorsement of humane methods of mass animal sterilization, 233). Such technical management is necessary because human beings and animals no longer encounter one another in an integral order of nature in which both participate, but in an abstract order characterized solely by competing interests (233–34). Such animals, although perhaps “liberated” from the brutality and violence associated with man’s socio-political and economic needs, are now simply subject to more a comprehensive kind of manipulation, one in which they play a role in confirming the existential identity of man as being the sole source of meaning in what is essentially a natural order devoid of any plan or purpose. Any animal who is thrust into a ubiquitous order of interests, so as to be fundamentally “the same” as a human person, is a creature who has, in the end, been abstracted from being a natural being altogether (i.e., a being endowed with an innate natural dignity). Its whole existence is conformed to some extrinsic, extra-natural purpose derived from man’s need to make up for his ontological lack. Although Singer refuses to admit that this “supervisory” role of human beings over animals is in any way one of mastery or conformity, it is, nevertheless, just that. Indeed, it seems that this is in fact a kind of absolute mastery, one in which the animal is denied any and all “right” to be what it naturally is.

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[i] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 78–79.

The Philosopher and the Beasts

JOHN LARACY

Rollin, Bernard E., *Putting the Horse Before Descartes: My Life's Work on Behalf of Animals* (Temple University Press, 2011).

Bernard E. Rollin—the weight-lifting, Harley-riding, animal-loving, Ivy-league-educated philosophy professor and leading animal-welfare advocate at Colorado State University—has written a suitably eccentric autobiography. It is, by turns, amusing, including humorous stories about animals and those who work with them; cheeky, including plenty of profanity; highly informative, including an overview of animal ethics in veterinary, scientific, agricultural, domestic, and legal practice; and thought-provoking, including summaries of Rollin's arguments from his “hundreds of papers and popular articles and seventeen books” (xi). In accord with his “healthy respect for regular people” (2) and “strong belief in common sense” (3), he uses simple language and reports, accordingly, that he has convinced various groups—e.g., rodeo cowboys, ranchers, farmers, veterinarians, and animal researchers—to treat animals better. His credibility can be explained by his moderate views. Ultimately, he accepts that human purposes may warrant killing and inflicting pain on animals, even though he seeks to reduce these practices.

Rollin fails, however, to present a coherent view of human nature, animal nature, and their relationship, on which his ethical recommendations might be based.

Unsurprisingly (see the title), he rejects Descartes' view, as he paraphrases it, “that animals had no minds...and were just machines” (13). What are animals for him, then? Taken together, his statements on the nature of animals are confusing.

Following Aristotle, he claims that each animal, unlike a machine, has a natural telos—a “functional goal” (43)—that determines how humans should treat it. Because each animal has its own intrinsic way of functioning, including an interior life, we must acknowledge that “what we do to animals matters to them,” not only to us humans (50). Accordingly, farm animals should “live decent lives” in a suitable environment, while laboratory animals should “have pain controlled” to the best extent possible (43). So far so good; this is indeed “common sense.” But Rollin then

goes on to deny that we can “define morally relevant differences between people and animals” (50; cf. 125). Likewise, he endorses David Hume’s opinion that “animals [obviously] experienced thoughts and feelings,” without distinguishing between human intellect and animal awareness (13; cf. 109). This failure to recognize our higher human telos conflicts with his view that we may domesticate, confine, and use animals for our human purposes, so long as we give them proper care. No doubt he would agree that there is a distinct moral standard for how we should treat other humans.

Rollin attempts to justify his ethical approach by describing it as a “social consensus ethic,” that is, one which judges the legitimacy of practices based on the principles of Western democracy (31, 39). Western democracies employ utilitarian reasoning to benefit the social community, while also safeguarding the individual by appeal to basic “rights”—a concept which Rollin grounds in deontological or duty-based ethics. Rollin’s original idea “was to plug animals into the logic of our societal ethical system” (48). He argues that animals are “entitled to the full application of our moral machinery for people, full entry into the moral arena, and legal protection commensurate with their moral status” (50). Truth be told, however, American democracy is not a solid basis for moral deliberation because it is characterized by its lack of an explicit view of the moral good. People disagree on whether the U.S. Constitution is based on Judeo-Christian, Enlightenment-rationalist, or bourgeois-economic principles, each interpretation diverging from the others on the nature of the person and his “rights.” To include sub-human animals as bearers of Constitutional “rights” only makes this immense problem of liberal democracy all the more problematic. The reader is liable to worry that Rollin would have us perpetually litigate the competing rights of human individuals, social communities, and animals.

In spite of these underlying philosophical problems, Rollin’s views on animal treatment and his actual accomplishments are generally commendable. Indeed, judged according to its explicit purpose, his book must be considered successful. Rollin tells his story in order “to show that even in today’s regimented and immensely complex world, individuals can effect meaningful change and perhaps inspire others to do so” (xi). Soon after joining the philosophy department at Colorado State University, he pioneered the field of veterinary ethics, convincing generations of veterinarians that their once-widespread practice of inflicting gratuitous pain on animals was in fact cruel. Subsequently, he has become involved in animal advocacy in virtually every pertinent area. He works with animal advocacy groups to try to overcome the all-too-common cycle of commercial breeding, irresponsible ownership,

abandonment, and euthanization of pets. Reacting against the widespread “ideology” that “science is value free in general and ethics-free in particular” (106), which in fact engenders callous mistreatment of laboratory animals, he promotes national legislation to control their pain and distress and, more fundamentally, to make researchers cognizant of the important ethical questions raised by their work.

Perhaps most significantly, he works with the agricultural industry to recover what he calls “husbandry”: “the ‘ancient contract’ with animals, a highly symbiotic relationship that endured essentially unchanged for thousands of years” (191). In traditional agriculture, humans and their animals are bound together for their mutual benefit: better care for animals correlates with better production. Practitioners of husbandry bring humans, animals, and the land into a sustainable symbiosis. Modern “factory farming,” by contrast, valorizes the “values of productivity and efficiency...to the detriment of animals, sustainability, the environment, agriculture as a way of life, rural communities, stewardship,” etc. (202). While exposing the appalling practices of factory farming (e.g., the use of debilitating sow and veal stalls; de-beaking chickens; causing injuries by mass-crowding and induced rapid growth, etc.), Rollin does not demonize people in the industry. In response to the growing population after the Great Depression and Dust Bowl, “agricultural scientists and government officials,” he explains, “became extremely concerned about supplying the public with cheap and plentiful food” (203). Still, farming practices have consequently devolved: animal mistreatment, disease risks, environmental degradation, and a lack of know-how have become prevalent. Appealing to real examples of large-scale farms that have converted to husbandry practices, he convincingly argues that we can renew our “ancient contract” with animals and the land, without sacrificing sufficient food production.

Rollin’s appeal to the ideal of husbandry points beyond his own “social consensus ethic” to a more coherent approach based on a view of being as a “holy order” (“hierarchy” in the etymological sense). On this broadly classical view—manifest in Genesis 1:3 and Aristotle’s *De Anima*, among other places—human stewards act as both the benefactors and beneficiaries of the lower animals. As Rollin acknowledges in spite of his atheism, “The ethic of husbandry is, in fact, taught throughout the Bible” (193). According to Genesis, for instance, humans have the unique task of freely receiving God’s creation and enacting its integral order. By perceiving the truth of animals, enjoying the goodness they afford, and delighting in their beauty, humans act in concert with creation. Domesticating animals in accord with their natures demonstrates a recognition of and respect for this order we did not create but have the

privilege of stewarding and bringing to fruition. The ethos underlying Rollin's best ethical recommendations is at least as old as God's self-revelation to the Hebrew people and is probably older still. Rollin, however, celebrates a "new 'social ethic for animals'" in line with the progressively inclusive ethos of modern democracy (237). He predicts that our democracy will eventually view the distinction between animals and humans as "morally irrelevant," just as it has done with distinctions regarding "gender, skin color, and ethnic origin" (46). Although this progressive democratic ethos has sought to overcome real injustice, it errs insofar as it subordinates the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation to human autonomy and social construction. To this extent, it colludes with the technological ideology of human control that Rollin rightly rejects.

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Two Acres and a Cow: Pleasures and Perils

CHRIS O'NEILL

Grohman, Joann S., *Keeping a Family Cow: The Complete Guide for Home-Scale, Holistic Dairy Producers* (3rd edition, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2013).

My wife Amanda and I bought our first family milk cow in August of 2009, two days before our anniversary. Amanda remembers the date precisely because we spent that anniversary in arguments over whether and how we ought to get rid of it. It did not take long for us to realize that the gap between what we thought we needed to do and what we actually needed to do to keep a cow was much wider than we had anticipated.

We became interested in cows shortly after moving to Loranger, Louisiana, a small rural community in a parish that was once dominated by small family dairies. The story of how the ideas of an enlightenment philosophy which separates man from nature gave rise to an industrialized economy and a technological culture had been something I had been thinking about for some time. The place we were living helped us to become acquainted with a lesser known chapter of that story, the history of modern dairying in the United States and the role of the pasteurization of milk. I learned of the tragic history of the epidemic of milk-borne diseases in industrialized cities of the early 20th century. These resulted largely from early attempts to keep dairy cows in city centers, usually near breweries where the cows could be fed the grain by-products of that process. Such environments proved inhospitable to cows and dangerous to the people who relied on them. At the same time, the nutritional requirements of large numbers of people in unheard of concentrations made it very difficult for cities to go without a constant supply of milk, which doesn't travel well and is prone to spoilage. Pasteurization became the only reliable way to get the milk into the city and keep the cow out of it—a technological achievement that contributed to the building of the modern city, but also one that brought about yet another separation of man from nature, this time man from cow.

We did not live in a city. We found ourselves on a 10-acre plot of land that was once part of a small dairy. Our plot still had the old cypress barn on it, complete with a milk parlor that was filled with layer of sawdust two feet thick.

The pasture, like the barn, was somewhat neglected but it was adequate. We had access to a supply of hay and water. The idea of attempting to keep our own family cow grew on us. We began to read, exploring the benefits and potential liabilities of keeping a dairy cow, about pasture requirements and management, cow nutrition and reproductive health, milk processing, and cheese making among other things. We cleaned up the barn and repaired the fences and mowed down the weeds. We had done our homework prior to making the decision to get a cow.

But a real cow in your back yard is not quite the same thing as the cow you read about in books. Amanda spent the first day getting no more than a half of a cup of milk from an uncooperative and impatient cow, and the next day watching its health decline with alarming speed. All of our research and preparation was bested in less than 48 hours. We began to wonder whether we hadn't made the worst decision of our lives.

Keeping a dairy cow required a fundamental shift in our way of thinking and way of life, and no amount of study or material preparation could have given us the familiarity with the cow nor the virtues necessary to care for it properly. After that eventful anniversary, we managed to acquire a pair of bull calves from a nearby dairyman who was kind, helpful, and encouraging. It turns out that the days-old calves were far more knowledgeable and skilled at providing what our cow needed than we were. Cows in milk quickly become ill if not milked regularly and thoroughly. It took two growing calves, in addition to our clumsy efforts, to keep up with her supply. With a temporary solution in hand, and a new experienced friend that was willing to help us, we decided to persevere.

It was only then that the significance of one book in particular became apparent. Of all the books we read, Joann Grohman's *Keeping a Family Cow* became by far the most important. *Keeping a Family Cow* is not the most scholarly work you can find on the issues surrounding dairying. You will not find in it the most articulate defense of the virtues of raw milk or the most nuanced critique of the "false economy" resulting from the nation's food policy (though these are discussed in the first part of the book). But what you will find is simple and straightforward advice for those trying to learn for the first time what it takes to actually care for a cow. There is wisdom in this book that feels like the recording of the common sense of a bygone era. Not too long ago, there was hardly a need for such a book. Today, we could not have done without it.

The dairy cow is a remarkable animal. To keep it and to enjoy its many benefits requires a profound respect for who she is and what she does. It is not enough to merely like cows, or to know something about bovine anatomy and biology. The most essential thing for keeping a family cow is to understand the cow, to be familiar with it. This is what Grohman helped us to do.

A cow is not a rational animal, so trying to argue with it is an exercise in futility and absurdity. I have attempted it many times. At the same time, the cow is not a machine which can simply be made to do what you want it to do. One does not take milk from a cow. It seems odd to have to say it, but producing milk is a function of mothering and it is the mother's prerogative to give it to whomever she favors. She may not be a rational animal, but she has a rich emotional life, and she isn't dumb. There is a reason behind what the cow does. In the end, she does make sense, but this understanding doesn't come naturally. An effort is required to conform one's thinking to the logic of the cow. The advice of an experienced friend helps, as does a book like *Keeping a Family Cow*. But nothing substitutes for contending with the reality.

At one time we had a big beautiful Brown Swiss cow who gave us fantastic milk with loads of cream for coffee, butter, ice-cream and the rest. As usual I stopped milking her a couple of months before she calved to give her an opportunity to focus her energies where they were most needed. When she came back into milk there was almost no cream. She was only giving us skim milk. It turned out that she was saving the cream for the calf! The cream starting coming back after a concerted effort on my part to be a little less business-like, a little more patient, and a lot more affectionate in the milk parlor—a lesson that I should have learned elsewhere in the course of my life.

Dairy cows are radically dependent on the people who keep them. Since they produce more milk than can be consumed by their calves, they don't stray far from the milk parlor, which they typically must visit twice a day. At the same time, they need a constant supply of quality grass and hay to maintain their health (which is why the City Cow experiment was doomed to fail). It is for this reason that, unlike other farm animals, the feral dairy cow is a rarity. It is difficult for a dairy cow to survive without the dairyman's help. The work she has to do requires the help of a competent farmer.

The relationship between the family and the cow has been part of our history for as far back as anyone can remember. It is one of mutual competence and affection, requiring constant and faithful effort—virtues which our techno-saturated culture has failed to instill in us. At the same time, the cow is a generous creature. She gives much more than she takes, providing the family with more than mere nourishment, that is, with

genuine pleasure. She inspires a reciprocal gratitude and generosity from those who care for her. Anyone interested in trying to understand better what has been lost to the dominant culture would do well to consider the cow and its place in the context of the family. If you are able, quite a lot more can be gained from actually keeping one. I am very grateful to have had just such an opportunity, and for the timely help of Joann Grohman's book.

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Symbiosis Regained: Resolving the Omnivore's Dilemma

KATRINA TEN EYCK

Pollan, Michael, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History in Four Meals* (Penguin, 2007).

All omnivores face the dilemma of what to eat. In his popular book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan is interested in the modern-American-omnivore's dilemma. For this omnivore has lost the traditional cultural food knowledge necessary to guide his eating decisions and is, therefore, particularly vulnerable to the lure of advertising, technological innovations, and fad diets. Moreover he is particularly vulnerable because he knows little and sees even less of how and where his food is produced.

The vastness of the United States, combined with its specific industrial farming practices, means that thousands of miles can lie between where food is grown and where it is eaten. This opaqueness allows for a myriad of practices to lie concealed and then camouflaged by advertising. Pollan's research illuminates the dark spaces within American food systems, which he then proceeds to map out: industrial agriculture, organic-industrial agriculture, and what might be called "beyond organic" or local farming. In following the lines of food production, Pollan gives the reader valuable awareness of all that remains hidden when one purchases cellophane-wrapped chicken legs, a plastic box of organic spring lettuce mix, free-range eggs or a McDonald's Happy Meal. But even more interestingly, Pollan wants to understand what corn, or a cow, or an egg is. And only because Pollan is interested in what food is is he able to articulate that what we eat affirms a way of conceiving what the world is, our place in it and our relationship to animals, plants and soil. This, for Pollan, is the real modern food dilemma.

Pollan begins by looking at industrial agriculture, but only when he meets Joel Salatin, a Virginian farmer, does he encounter someone who is explicitly thinking about what food and animals are, and farming accordingly. Salatin suggests to Pollan

that the best way to determine which farmers are “organic” would be to take a look at their bookshelves—because their farming will be an extension of their worldview. The philosophical founder, so to speak, of the organic movement was Sir Albert Howard (1873–1947), who attempted to combat the mechanistic thinking that had reduced fertility to three essential soil inputs: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. This scientific breakthrough reconceived plants as machines that needed these three inputs and consequently disregarded the entire micro-cosmos that is humus, the world of organisms, manure, and plants working in a cycle to generate fertile soil. Howard saw that such thinking in agriculture would fragment the complex and symbiotic relationships on a farm. In his view, the health of the soil, plants, animals, and humans were of one piece; and to begin to break apart these ecological relationships by conceiving of one part in mechanistic terms would tear asunder the entire system, leading to the mechanization of each layer, the consequences of which would inevitably impact human health.

On Salatin’s Polyface Farm one can see healthy ecological relationships in action. In contrast to the monocultures found on industrial farms, at Polyface Farm one finds pasture lands, beef cattle, egg-laying hens, broiler chickens, pigs, rabbits, grapevines, an orchard, and forest land. Each part is related to the whole, and each part is considered in its wholeness. Salatin employs the word holon (crafted from the Greek holos, whole, and the ending -on, as in proton or neutron) to capture the fact that on a healthy farm the wholeness of a cow or a blade of grass must be cared for, which allows it to also be a part of the entirety of the farm—an intricate ecosystem. Thus, the fact that, after grazing a pasture, cows leave behind manure with bugs, fly larvae, and other undesirable creatures which may be dangerous for them offers an opportunity for Salatin’s chickens to do their symbiotic work. The chickens love to peck through the cow droppings, essentially sanitizing the pasture as well as moving the fertile manure around, effectively preparing the pasture for another cycle of grass growth. Or we could say that the cows have prepared the way for the chickens by mowing the grass and leaving tasty morsels that nourish their bodies and eggs. And the chickens, in their turn, have served us by converting grass and bugs into nutrient-dense eggs. In Salatin’s words, “in an ecological system like this everything’s connected to everything else, so you can’t change one thing without changing ten other things” (213). His farm functions in a circular way, each plant and animal living in relation to another, both nourishing and being nourished by the other, all the while the natural predilections of every animal are observed.

Industrial farming stands in stark contrast to the ecological, mutually beneficial

relationships that Salatin cultivates at Polyface Farm. It has abandoned nature's own way of working, adopting artificial substitutes. Along with the discovery of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium as essential fertilizers was the discovery that one could chemically produce nitrogen. This meant that natural sources of nitrogen, and thus the ecological relationships that provided nitrogen for soil, could be disregarded and chemical factories employed instead.

Since the mass production of nitrogen became possible, farms have been fragmented into parts that serve an industrial system. Once upon a time, a farmer could at least sustain his own family's diet, and one saw variety similar to Salatin's on farms across America. Now all one sees from fence row to fence row is corn or soybeans. The farmer's task is, in effect, to grow one part, one cog, for the industrial machine. In the words of an Iowan farmer Pollan visited, "We're on the bottom of the industrial food chain here, using this land to produce energy and protein, mostly to feed animals. Corn is the most efficient way to produce energy, soybeans the most efficient way to produce protein...." (54).

In a mass economy, corn is prized because it can be stored for a long time, turning it into something more than food—a commodity. It can be traded; speculated in and against on the stock exchange. It can also be standardized and relied upon to produce consistent products. Furthermore, corn lends itself to a variety of transformations, enabling it to become an ingredient in nearly every item in the grocery store.

Although our grocery stores seem to offer a bountiful variety, the truth is that we ever more reject the differences that would come with locally based agriculture: "[We] prize consistency, mechanization, predictability, interchangeability and economies of scale" (201). Supermarket chains prefer to purchase from suppliers who can guarantee a uniform product throughout their network of stores, and thus they favor purchasing from enormous farms instead of local farms. Moreover, animals fed a standardized corn crop will tend to produce meat that can be labeled according to USDA standards. A small local farm, by contrast, will yield a limited amount of produce, limited precisely by the scale of its land and the number of animals it can healthily sustain. Also, meat from grass-fed animals and eggs from free-roaming chickens reflect the qualities of the particular pasture land of a farm. That is to say that Salatin beef will taste like Salatin beef, and most likely different from beef raised in Montana, over a thousand miles away.

Industrial agriculture seems to offer its greatest benefit in producing cheap food. However, most of the real costs of this food are hidden. Pollan lists some of these

uncalculated costs: soil erosion, dwindling populations in rural areas, bankrupt farmers, antibiotic resistant microorganisms, food poisoning by E. coli O157:H7, growing health problems in the general population, farm subsidies that keep corn cheap, the toxic manure lagoon produced by every feedlot, nitrogen runoff poisoning our rivers, the Gulf of Mexico, and the ocean resulting in a “eight-thousand-square-mile zone so starved of oxygen nothing but algae can live in it” (83), as well as the military power needed to secure Middle Eastern oil.

In researching the major organic food system, Pollan discovered that here, too, industrial logic holds sway. Certainly, organic farms are using alternative methods of pest and weed control along with organic fertilizers, and yet the industrial food system pressures them into monoculture planting, and overworking the soil with similar results in soil degeneration. The overall cost to the soil and water is less than with conventional chemical interventions, but it still remains unsustainable—albeit more profitable. Furthermore, both systems require a massive amount of fossil fuels to function. In the case of organic produce, petroleum is required to refrigerate and quickly ship food across the country.

In short, Pollan shows that modern industrial agriculture is a no win game. Not a few farmers feel trapped in an unsustainable system, both in the sense that they live on the edge of bankruptcy and that the practice is bankrupting the earth. Only companies which process corn into a myriad of products—everything from animal feed to cornstarch to the mysterious ingredients listed on the label of any processed food—are making profits.

It would seem that one can support such a system of food production only if one accepts a mechanistic conception of the human body (i.e., as a machine for which any input of calories and protein will suffice) and holds an implicit faith that technology will rescue us from its costs. Otherwise, one would have to make an “almost heroic act of not knowing, or, now, forgetting” (84) how this system works in order to eat its products..

In the final part of his book, Pollan examines philosophical vegetarianism à la Peter Singer. Pollan comes to see that Singer’s views are those of a sentimental urbanite living far from any farm land, let alone an ecological farm such as Salatin’s (where even a vegetarian diet requires animal manure). Moreover, the power structure of master and slave that Singer critiques simply is not in place at Polyface Farm. Pollan recognizes as much, but his analysis nevertheless falls short. What he fails to articulate is that at Polyface Farm one glimpses relationships among the soil, plants,

animals, and humans that are characterized by generosity. It is astounding that the droppings of a cow can feed a chicken, that a turkey's romp through a vineyard can fertilize it and control pests, that a pig can burrow through three months of cow manure sprinkled with corn and woodchips, simultaneously feasting and roto-tilling fertilizer to be used on the farm. Salatin's stewardship, which prepares feast after feast for his animals, serves his animals' health as they, in turn, serve his. What seems to be on display at Polyface Farm is the generosity that animates the symbiotic relationships among animals and human beings in an ecosystem. Pollan repeatedly tells us that certain crops and animals have evolved to rely upon humans—corn and chickens for example. Is plant and animal dependence upon humans really an evolutionary tactic, as Pollan so often suggests, or is it an enduring feature of the world that species relate in this generous fashion? Pollan makes a better case for answering this question affirmatively than he seems to realize.

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