

Working Out the Beast

An Alternative History of Western Humaneness

James A. Serpell

Sometimes men have held the anthropomorphic view that animals and men are very much alike, with the same emotions and similar mental powers. . . . At other times men have held stubbornly to the anthropocentric opinion that this is a man's world and that an unbridgeable chasm yawns between the human race and other species. Among Europeans, Christianity has encouraged this anthropocentric attitude.

—Dix Harwood, *Love for Animals and How it Developed in Great Britain, 1928*

INTRODUCTION

MOST HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS of the growth of public sympathy for the plight of non-human animals (henceforth referred to as “animals”) depict it as a relatively recent phenomenon associated with the great social reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Harwood 1928; Ritvo 1987; Ryder 1991; Thomas 1983; Turner 1980). These surveys clearly document a significant softening of attitudes toward the treatment of animals during this period, particularly among the emerging urban middle classes, and they tend to give the impression that kindness or compassion toward animals is a strictly modern and largely Western invention. Less than three hundred years ago, for example, animal-loving England was described by one foreign visitor as “a hell for horses,” and the centuries of European history prior to about 1700 seem to offer little more than a bleak vista of ongoing callousness and cruelty toward animals, receding forever into an increasingly brutal, savage, and Hobbesian past (Harwood 1928). Or, as one recent article put it, “despite references to kindly treatment of animals in the Bible, among the ancient Greeks, and in some early ecclesiastical writings, little concern existed among the general populace toward this issue prior to the modern era” (Kellert & Felthous 1985).

For the founders of the humane movement during the nineteenth century, this historical change in attitudes regarding animal suffering was a clear sign of social

progress toward the goal of moral enlightenment. Cruelty to animals was, in their view, a symptom of the fundamentally brutal nature of most humans. As far as many educated Victorians were concerned, children—especially male children—were innately cruel and heartless and needed to be carefully socialized and “improved” through exposure to morally uplifting activities and pastimes. Also ripe for moral uplift were the working classes who were widely regarded as a dangerous and disorderly rabble, governed by “brute” passions and addicted to vicious “blood sports” such as bull-baiting and cock-fighting (Ritvo 1987).

At the same time, sensational travelers’ tales of “primitive savages” living wild, animal-like existences in remote outposts of the Empire helped to fuel the Victorian middle classes’ sense of beleaguered cultural superiority. Even Charles Darwin had reservations about the humanity of some of the peoples he encountered on his famous *Beagle* voyage. Referring to the native people of Tierra del Fuego, he confessed to his journal that he “could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilized man; it is greater than between a wild and domesticated animal, inasmuch as in man there is a greater power of improvement.” For Darwin and his contemporaries, “civilization” was a process clearly analogous to animal taming or domestication. It could only be achieved and maintained through the active suppression of mankind’s original, savage or beastlike character, and the simultaneous cultivation of domesticity, gentility, and self-control. While the poet Tennyson exhorted his readers to “move upwards, working out the beast,” nineteenth-century humanitarians used humane education—the attempt to inculcate compassion and concern for animals and other vulnerable groups—as a key weapon of social control against what they saw as the bestial and disruptive elements of Victorian society (Ritvo 1987).

Notwithstanding the demands of political correctness, these progressionist ideas about the origins of cruelty and kindness to animals are still firmly imbedded in our culture. They form the basis of most of our anticruelty laws and they are implicit in many of our humane education programs and initiatives. Inadvertently, they have also given rise to the notion that cruelty to animals, or at least indifference to their welfare, is essentially the bottom line, and that humaneness is a sort of luxury that can only be afforded by those individuals and cultures who are fortunate enough to have the time and resources to squander on such refinements. The aim of the present chapter is to challenge these long-established ideas and perceptions by re-examining the history of humaneness from a somewhat wider perspective. According to this alternative account, the association of humaneness with “civilization” is based on erroneous beliefs about the ethics (or lack of ethics) of preliterate and “precivilized” peoples, and on a strictly limited, Eurocentric history of the treatment of animals. I argue, instead, that the virtual exclusion of animals from the sphere of moral consideration that typified pre-eighteenth century Europe was the exception rather than the rule, and that the changes in attitude that occurred after

this represented a sort of reversion to pre-existing moral values following a temporary, and in many ways aberrant, episode of extreme anthropocentrism.

IN THE BEGINNING

Until about 11,000 years ago, humans throughout the world lived entirely by hunting, fishing, and foraging for wild foods. The term "hunter-gatherer" has been coined to describe cultures of this type, and it is generally accepted that this was the original, ancestral lifestyle of all modern humans. We can only guess at the length of time our hominid forebears lived by hunting and gathering, but even the most conservative estimates suggest that variations on this subsistence theme have been around for at least 500,000 years (Mithen 1996). Anthropologists and archaeologists are understandably cautious about using living or recent hunter-gatherers as a source of insight concerning the attitudes and beliefs of our pre-agricultural ancestors. Among the very few that still survive, most living hunter-gatherers have been more or less acculturated by their more aggressive agricultural neighbors and nearly all of them have been substantially marginalized economically. Nevertheless, as surviving exemplars of a particular—and once universal—mode of economic subsistence, recent hunter-gatherers can hardly be ignored as a reference point, particularly when the same ideological themes are shared by many otherwise ethnically diverse populations. One of these shared themes concerns the perception and treatment of animals.

A remarkable degree of consistency in attitudes and beliefs about animals exists among hunter-gatherer societies as far apart as Siberia, Amazonia, or the Kalahari region of southern Africa. Briefly summarized, these beliefs include the notion that animals are fully rational, sentient, and intelligent beings in no way inferior to humans, and that the bodies of animals, like those of people, are animated by non-corporeal spirits or "souls" that survive the body after death. Although it is recognized that certain skills are needed in order to be a good hunter, it is also believed that no amount of skill or ingenuity will succeed if the animal quarry is unwilling to submit to being killed. Game animals must therefore be treated at all times with proper respect and consideration in order to earn their goodwill. Failure to treat the animal respectfully may cause either the animal's spirit, or that of its spiritual guardian, to demand some form of posthumous restitution. Types of spiritual retribution that may result from disrespectful behavior include the infliction of illness, injury, madness, or death on the hunter or other members of his family or clan, or loss of success in future hunting (Speck 1977; Martin 1978; Campbell 1984; Nelson 1986; Guenther 1988; Wenzel 1991). As Ingold (1994:15) has observed, "The hunter hopes that by being good to animals, they in turn will be good to him. But by the same token, the animals have the power to withhold if any attempt is made to coerce what they are not, of their own volition, prepared to provide. . . . Animals thus maltreated will desert the hunter, or even cause him ill fortune."

Not surprisingly, these beliefs about animals and the consequences of treating them improperly tend to generate considerable anxiety: anxiety that is expressed and relieved through the performance of strict and elaborate hunting rules and rituals. In many cultures, for example, the actual act of killing an animal is performed in a prescribed way, often accompanied by spoken apologies or excuses, and in a manner that avoids unnecessary cruelty. A wounded animal must be tracked and pursued, for days if necessary, rather than being allowed to die in vain, and once dead, its carcass must be treated in a morally appropriate fashion: skinned and butchered appropriately, scrupulously shared with other members of the group, and consumed entirely so that no edible or usable remains are wasted. Any parts that cannot be used must be disposed of in the correct ceremonial manner appropriate to the species; for instance, among certain Native American groups, unused beaver remains were carefully wrapped up together and placed in the nearest river or stream.

Specific dietary taboos are also widespread. In general, these arise from the notion that each hunter has a special spiritual affinity with certain animal species, and is therefore forbidden to kill them or eat their flesh. Often this sense of affinity is derived from the contents of dreams or visions induced by fasting, dancing, sleep deprivation, or the consumption of psychoactive drugs. The object of these vision quests is to obtain the goodwill of the animal spirits; an essential prerequisite for good health and successful hunting. In addition to dietary fasting, sexual abstinence and other forms of self-denial (or even self-mutilation) are also commonly practiced in order to win the animals' sympathy (Hallowell 1926; Benedict 1929; Speck 1977; Martin 1978; Campbell 1984; Nelson 1986; Wenzel 1991; Ingold 1994). Although, in theory, anybody can gain access to the spirit world by these means, certain individuals, often known as shamans, are believed to possess a special talent for communicating with animal or guardian spirits. In many hunter-gatherer societies, the shaman thus fulfills the same sort of role as a medium or priest by interceding with the supernatural powers on behalf of the rest of the community (Eliade 1964).

All of this emphasis on maintaining correct and respectful relations with animals and nature, and particularly the prohibitions against waste, have led some anthropologists to describe hunter-gatherers as "resource managers" who have developed a "conservation ethic" that inhibits them from overexploiting their natural resources. Referring to the Koyukon of central Alaska, for example, the anthropologist Richard Nelson (1986:211) states that

Strong sanctions apply to killing animals or plants and leaving them unused. Meat is carefully butchered and stored where it will not spoil . . . and fullest possible use is made of it to avoid offending the animal's spirit. . . . Koyukon hunters go to great lengths to avoid losing wounded game. If a shot animal escapes, it is doggedly pursued, every effort is made to retrieve it, and if it is not found the hunter is genuinely upset. Most animal meat and organs are utilized, and disposal of the parts considered unusable is carried out in special, respectful ways. . . . Among the

Koyukon, reverence for nature, which is strongly manifested in both religion and personality, is unquestionably related to conscious limitation of use.

In reality, however, the explicit reason given for avoiding wasteful use of animal products is the fear of causing the animal offense and thereby provoking its spiritual retaliation. This may or may not include the disappearance of game, but it also carries the more immediate personal threat of disease, injury, or death if ritual codes of conduct—some of which appear to have no obvious relation to resource conservation—are violated. It may therefore be more accurate to say that hunter-gatherers have evolved an *ethic of respect* for animals based on the belief that they share many of the morally relevant characteristics of persons. Killing animals needlessly, disrespectfully, or in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering is thus morally equivalent to murder, a sin that must be expiated and atoned for in order to avoid supernatural punishment.

So what happened to this highly developed ethic of respect for animals? Why do we see so few traces of it among the cultures (including our own) that gradually displaced subsistence hunter-gatherers from all but the most marginal corners of the globe? Probably because such an egalitarian moral ideology was incompatible with the successful exploitation of domestic, as opposed to wild, animals. Subsistence hunters need to understand and identify with the animals they depend on for food. An insensitive hunter is a bad hunter; a good hunter is one who learns to “think like” his prey, to empathize with it. Such a high level of personal identification almost inevitably leads to the animals being perceived as near equals or even kinsmen, not to mention the attendant moral conflicts associated with hunting and devouring those “kin.” Conversely, a hunter does not ordinarily interact with his prey socially and, except at the moment of the animal’s death, he exercises little or no control over it. The animal remains an independent being with a mind of its own, and it is possible for the hunter to convince himself that, if the animal allowed itself to be killed, it did so of its own free will. It would require a supreme feat of self-deception for a farmer or herdsman to reach a similar conclusion. The domestic animal is almost totally dependent for survival on its human custodian. It has no free will, as such. Moreover, because they live together in what is, to some extent, a combined social group, it is not unusual for farmers and herdsman to establish social bonds with their animals and vice versa. The moral dilemma is, therefore, far more intense for the farmer than the hunter, because killing or harming the animal in this context effectively constitutes a gross betrayal of trust (Serpell 1996).

Farmers, herdsman, and others who benefit from the exploitation of domestic species have dealt with this ethical dilemma using a variety of coping strategies (see Serpell 1996). Perhaps the most pervasive and durable was the idea that humans are both morally separate from, and superior to, all other animals. As Ingold (1994, 16) has recently observed, the ideological difference between hunters and herdsman

primarily involves a shift from human-animal relations based on *trust* to those based on *domination*:

In the world of the hunter, animals, too, are supposed to care, to the extent of laying down their lives for humans by allowing themselves to be taken. They retain, however, full control over their own destiny. Under pastoralism, that control has been relinquished to humans. It is the herdsman who makes life-or-death decisions concerning what are now ‘his’ animals. . . . He sacrifices them; they do not sacrifice themselves to him. They are cared for but they are not themselves empowered to care. Like dependents in the household of a patriarch, their status is that of jural minors, subject to the authority of their human master. In short, the relationship of pastoral care, quite unlike that of the hunter towards animals, is founded on a principle not of trust but of domination.

LAMBS OF GOD

The advent of agriculture and animal husbandry roughly 11,000 years ago thus produced a dramatic shift in the balance of power between humans and the animals they depended on for food. From being independent coequals or superiors, animals became slaves and subordinates, increasingly dependent on people for care and protection. This shift in power relations was reflected in religious belief systems that became progressively more and more hierarchical throughout the ancient world. Just as humans became dominant over their domestic livestock, the original animal guardian spirits were elevated to the status of zoomorphic gods with increasingly awesome powers over human lives and livelihoods. Initially, the jurisdiction of these godlike entities was probably confined to the species they represented: bull gods to regulate the husbandry and slaughter of cattle, ram gods presiding over sheep, and so on. Over time, however, the connections between these gods and their animal progenitors became increasingly tenuous, and the gods themselves became correspondingly anthropomorphic in appearance and behavior. During this metamorphosis, they first acquired human heads or torsos before eventually becoming fully humanoid. Long after this, however, many retained the ability to transform themselves into animals when occasion demanded. The “major” gods also became fewer in number and associated in more general ways with aspects of the agricultural cycle: the sun, the rain, soil fertility, seasonal changes, and so on (Schwabe 1994). Perhaps reflecting the potentially devastating ecological uncertainties of rising populations and seasonal agricultural production, this new generation of deities was also viewed as capricious and spiteful, ready to dole out drought, famine, and pestilence on a seemingly arbitrary basis. In response to these perceived threats, wholesale animal sacrifice was widely practiced during this period. In theory, these sacrifices represented a way of nourishing the gods and atoning for any grievances they may have

had. In practice, they also provided people with a method of exonerating themselves from the guilt associated with slaughtering and consuming their animal dependents.

In all of the ancient agrarian civilizations—Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Assyria, and India—the killing of food animals in a nonsacrificial manner was considered a crime, morally equivalent to manslaughter. Only those properly versed in the sacred mysteries were allowed to sacrifice animals, and only the blood or small portions of the animals typically were reserved for the gods. The rest of the meat was either returned to the animal's owner or redistributed to the populace at large. Because the consumption of unsacrificed meat was also considered taboo, the priests who performed these sacrifices tended to exercise relatively exclusive control over meat production, slaughter, and distribution. Surviving accounts of sacrificial rituals indicate that ideally the animal was supposed to approach the altar willingly, without coercion, and that it was often encouraged to nod its head as if assenting to its own slaughter. Following the sacrifice, the priests who performed the act sometimes whispered apologies in the animal's ear, and it was not uncommon for the sacrificial knife to be "punished" by being destroyed. In many cases, the sacrificial animal was also pampered and nurtured for a period of time before being killed, as if to compensate it for its untimely demise. All of these features of animal sacrifice, including the specialized role of the priesthood, appear specially designed to evade individual responsibility for the animal's death. First, the animal is blamed for giving its assent, then the knife is blamed as the instrument of slaughter, then the priests are culpable as the agents of death, and finally the gods are ultimately responsible for demanding the sacrifice in the first place. The whole performance resembles an elaborate exercise in blame shifting (Serpell 1996).

Direct evidence of ambivalence regarding the ethics of animal sacrifice can also be discerned in early literature. In the earliest religious text from India, the *Rig Veda*, the oldest sections are primarily devoted to describing how, when, and where animal sacrifice should be performed. It is apparent that during this period, religious slaughter was a ubiquitous and extremely frequent occurrence that preceded almost any endeavor for which the outcome was uncertain. Later sections, however, thought to date from around 800 B.C.E., categorically reject sacrifice and advocate the practice of *ahimsa* (noninjury) toward all living things, an idea that subsequently became integral to the philosophies of three major, contemporary Indian religions: Buddhism, Jainism, and the yogic branches of Hinduism. It seems that the civilization of India underwent some sort of revolution in attitudes to the treatment of animals at about this time in its history, and one recent authority has suggested that this was a moral reaction to the excessive use of sacrifice in the earlier period (Jacobson 1994).

Evidence of similar concerns are also apparent in classical Greek literature from about 500 B.C.E. Although it is not known whether the new ideas were locally generated or the result of cultural transmission from the East, it is clear that the Pythagorean and Orphic schools of Greek philosophy believed in the characteris-

tically eastern concept of metempsychosis or reincarnation—the idea that the soul or spirit is eternally reborn after death in different bodies, including those of animals. According to most accounts, Pythagoras and his followers were not only opposed to animal sacrifice for this reason, but also advocated a vegetarian diet. Opposition to religious slaughter and vegetarian advocacy continued to recur as themes in classical philosophical literature until at least the third century A.D. (Sorabji 1993; Spencer 1993). In contrast to the situation in India, however, their influence was counterbalanced and ultimately overwhelmed by Aristotle's (384–322 B.C.E.) hierarchical and purposeful account of nature as an ascending ladder (*Scala Naturae*) of living creatures, each created by a "Supreme Being" to serve as food or labor for those higher up the scale. Aristotle based his hierarchy on differences in the supposed rationality or reasoning ability of different organisms. In his view, humans, by virtue of their superior powers of reason, were entitled to use less rational beings for food or other purposes, and no duty of respect was owed to them since, in effect, they only existed in order to be used. This essentially human-centered worldview represented a radical departure from all previous ideas concerning humanity's place in nature. Whereas all previous philosophies had accorded animals at least some degree of respect, as well as acknowledging the inherent moral culpability associated with killing and eating them, Aristotle's proposal effectively provided its adherents with a license to use or abuse other life forms with a clear conscience (Clutton-Brock 1995).

THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Around the beginning of the fourth century A.D., Aristotle's ideas were incorporated into Christian tradition. In a discussion of the biblical commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," St. Augustine (A.D. 354–430) stated that people should not make the mistake of applying this rule to "irrational living things, whether flying, swimming, walking, or crawling, because they are not associated in a community with us by *reason*, since it is not given to them to have *reason* in common with us. Hence it is by a very just ordinance of the Creator that their life and death is subordinated to our use" (quoted in Sorabji 1993).

Augustine's views were later consolidated and refined by the medieval Dominican scholar Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225–1274), who not only denied rationality to animals but also immortality. Like Aristotle, on whose works he drew heavily, Aquinas believed that only the reasoning part of the soul survived the body after death. Because animals lacked the power of reason, their souls therefore perished along with their bodies. This apparently simple conclusion had far-reaching implications. By denying animals an afterlife, Aquinas rescued Christians from the otherwise alarming prospect of encountering the vengeful spirits of their hapless animal victims somewhere in the hereafter. It therefore reinforced the notion that humans had no reason to feel morally concerned about the treatment of other species. As if to

emphasize this point, Aquinas also reinterpreted Old Testament passages that appeared to advocate kindness toward animals: "If in Holy Scripture there are found some injunctions forbidding the infliction of some cruelty towards brute animals . . . this is either for removing a man's mind from exercising cruelty towards other men, lest anyone, from exercising cruelty upon brutes, should go on hence to human beings; or because the injury inflicted on animals turns to a temporal loss for some man." In other words, according to Aquinas, people had no direct moral duties toward animals at all. Wanton cruelty should be avoided, but only for economic reasons or because it might encourage cruelty to fellow humans; not because of the suffering inflicted on the animals themselves. Animals had no moral rights because "only a person, that is, a being possessed of reason and self-control, can be the subject of rights and duties." Aquinas also sanctioned Aristotelian physics and astronomy, according to which the Sun and the planets revolved around the Earth, which was conveniently fixed in the middle of a finite Universe. By doing so, he placed humans on a pinnacle at the very center of creation and endowed them with the freedom to exercise total dominion over every other living thing (Serpell 1996).

Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* soon became one of the most important and influential works of Christian theology. It had a profound impact on European thought and philosophy, and, as a guide to how Christians ought—or ought not—to behave, it was virtually unchallenged until the growth of Renaissance skepticism toward the end of the sixteenth century. Even now, the Catholic Church's position on the status and treatment of animals remains essentially the same as that proposed by Aquinas more than 700 years ago.

The longevity of Aquinas's ideas owes a great deal to the writings of the brilliant French philosopher René Descartes, whose famous dualist view of human nature reinforced the Thomist doctrine by creating an absolute, unbridgeable gap between humans and other animals. Descartes, a deeply religious man, was disturbed by the skeptic critiques of philosophers, such as Montaigne, who openly attacked the notion of excluding animals from moral consideration. He countered by arguing that only humans are capable of rational thought, and that this characteristic not only endows us with immortal souls but also makes us fundamentally different from all other life forms, which are essentially no different from complex machines (Serpell 1996). Although he probably never intended it so, Descartes's theory also led to the denial of feelings or "sentience" to animals. It therefore helped to create a moral climate in which established forms of animal abuse, such as "canned" hunts and animal-baiting and fighting could flourish, as well as promoting the newly fashionable pursuit of vivisection. Public displays of the vivisector's art—performed at a time when there were no anaesthetic or analgesic agents available to dull the victim's pain—were commonplace throughout Europe during this period, and they eventually became one of the main focuses of humanitarian criticism from the beginning of the eighteenth century onward (Maehle 1994).

The progress of this new enlightenment sensitivity to animal suffering has been

amply documented elsewhere, and need not be reiterated here (see, e.g., Harwood 1928; Thomas 1983; Maehle 1994). The point that is worth re-emphasizing, however, is that the extreme anthropocentrism of medieval and early modern Christianity apparently provoked a moral backlash, in some ways similar to the vegetarian backlash prompted by the excesses of sacrifice and meat-eating some 2,000 years earlier.

CONCLUSIONS

Nineteenth-century humanitarians promulgated a distorted history of humaneness according to which the growth of sympathetic feelings for animals was a mark of civilization—a sign that middle-class Victorians and their successors had risen above, and brought under control, a world of nature that included their own potentially "brutish" animality. Although no longer explicit, this *kind-cruel, tame-wild, civilized-uncivilized* metaphor still carries considerable rhetorical force within the humane movement, as well as informing many of its policies. The main conclusion of this chapter is that this particular account of why people are kind or abusive toward animals is largely erroneous.

Humaneness is not a modern phenomenon. It is an ancient human characteristic with its roots buried somewhere in our hunting and gathering past. Precisely how ancient is largely a matter of guesswork because values and belief systems leave few traces in the archaeological record. Given the overwhelming prominence of animal images in Paleolithic cave art, however, it appears likely that ritual concerns about the ethical aspects of animal exploitation were already widespread at least 30,000 years ago (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989; Mithen 1996), some 19,000 years before the dawn of agriculture, and some 28,000 years before the birth of Christ. If so, it seems reasonable to claim that humaneness is a "natural" human propensity that needs to be actively suppressed or denied in order to engage in acts of animal abuse or cruelty. This claim is certainly borne out by the history of post-Neolithic Europe where successive religious ideologies pushed animals closer and closer to the limits of moral concern, while simultaneously providing people with an assortment of ethical justifications for ignoring their suffering. Official Christianity, at least in its medieval and early modern form, represented the most extreme and exaggerated exemplar of this trend.

Does it really matter if our histories of humaneness are distorted or erroneous? What difference does it make in the long run? First and foremost, it makes a difference to how we should deal with animal abuse and cruelty in the modern context. Our beliefs concerning the origins of cruel or abusive treatment of animals determine our strategies for overcoming these problems, so it is obviously helpful if our beliefs approximate reality. If we assume, as did the Victorians, that animal abuse is a manifestation of savage and primitive "animal" instincts lurking beneath the civilized veneer of modern life, we may limit ourselves to fighting an apparent rear-guard action against biological or socioeconomic forces beyond our control. If, on

the other hand, we begin with the premise that humans possess a natural propensity to include animals within their sphere of moral concern but are sometimes discouraged from doing so by cultural or ideological factors, then the prospects for real improvements in the treatment of animals seem more attainable.

Above all, this alternative history suggests that we should focus more of our energies on trying to understand the reasons why—and the processes by which—these natural humane tendencies become suppressed or corrupted during development. Our culture has a 700-year history of condoning and even promoting widespread and systematic animal abuse—a tradition that still thrives in a number of socially accepted practices such as factory farming, sport hunting, rodeos, rattlesnake roundups, and so on. As long as such activities are considered normal or even “fun,” it will be difficult to resurrect the sort of ethic of respect for animals so typical of our hunting and gathering forebears. On the other hand, our culture’s peculiarly anthropocentric worldview appears to be highly atypical, and it is probably therefore vulnerable to being overturned by more humane, zoophilic, and ecocentric moral philosophies. The last three hundred years has seen a gradual but accelerating change in attitudes to the treatment of animals and the natural world, and this trend seems certain to continue for the foreseeable future. Who knows? A hundred years from now, the anthropocentrism of medieval and early modern Europe may seem like a brief and destructive hiccup in the ideological history of our species.

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