



The Resolved Church

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The Difference between Humans and Animals | Pastor Duane Smets

- 1 - moral accountability for actions.
 - > animals do not hold each other accountable for their actions.
- 2 - inner sense of right and wrong
 - > animals have little if any innate sense of morality or justice but simply respond from fear of punishment or hope of reward
- 3 - spiritual life (relate to God, pray, praise, hear)
 - > no animal will ever spend an hour in prayer
- 4 - immortality
 - > animals do not question their own mortality or immortality.
- 5 - ability to reason and think logically
 - > animals sometimes exhibit remarkable behavior in solving mazes or working out problems in the physical world, but they certainly do not engage in abstract thinking. no such thing as the "history of canine philosophy." no animals have ever developed their understanding of ethical problems or use of philosophical concepts, etc. no chimps will ever sit around the table discussing the trinity.
- 6 - development of physical and technical skills
 - > beavers still build the same kind of dams they have built for thousands of generations, birds still build the same kind of nests, and bees still build the same kinds of hives. we continue to develop greater skill and complexity in technology, in agriculture, in science, and in nearly every field.
- 7 - use of complex, abstract language
 - > a four year old can be told to go get the big, red, screwdriver from the workbench in the basement. even if he had never seen it before, he could easily perform the task because he knew meanings of "go," "get," "big," "red," "screwdriver," "workbench," and "basement." he could have done the same for a small, brown hammer or a black bucket beside the workbench or any of dozens of other items that he perhaps had never seen before but could visualize when described to him. No chimpanzee in all history has been able to perform such a task. a task that has not been learned through repetition with reward, but is simply described in words that refer to an item that the hearer has never seen before. yet four-year old human beings can do this routinely, and we think nothing of it. most 9 year olds can write an understandable letter to their grandparents describing a trip to the zoo, or can move to a foreign country and learn any other language in the world, and we think it entirely normal. no animal will ever write such a letter to its grandparents, or give the past, present, and future of even one french verb, or read a detective story and understand it, or understand the meaning of even one verse of the Bible. human children can do all these things quite readily, and in so doing they show themselves so far superior to the whole animal kingdom.
- 8 - awareness of the distant future (our inward sense that we will live beyond the time of our physical death)
- 9 - human creativity (art, music, and literature, scientific and technological inventiveness)
 - > there is no history of animal art, music, literature, science or technology
- 10 - emotions

> animals do show some emotions but not in complex experience. (i.e. after watching a son's baseball game a father can simultaneously feel sad that his team lost, happy that he played well, proud that he was a good sport, thankful for his existence, joyful all day, and anxious about being late for dinner)

11- depth of interpersonal harmony

> animals do have a sense of community with each other but it is merely instinctual. no family relationships, peripheral relationships etc.

12 – marriage

> animals do not marry

13 – right to rule

> animals do not develop government

issues:

though humans are creatures, like animals in many ways since they are both creatures, humans are of an entirely different class. there are orders of nature, an animal is of a different class than a plant and a human is of a different class than an animal. what makes humans most significant is our moral capacity wherein we can uniquely relate to God and other human beings. the flagrance of merely considering humans to be sophisticated apes overlooks not only our vast differences but overlooks this unique nature of human beings. if the argument presented here has validity then it has implications not only for vegetarianism and cannibalism but also for the existential human dilemma.

vegetarianism has merit as a preference for particular flavors and textures but not as a moral constitution. arguments for vegetarianism based on a supposed vulgarity relating to eating another living thing is rooted in the projection of human nature onto animals. in addition, for such a vegetarian argument to be consistent eating plants or even fruit fallen off a tree would also be a violation for they too are living organisms.

cannibalism is rightly detestable for it violates the honor and respect which is due for creatures with a moral capacity. it is not just a matter of eating another of the same kind but is a matter of acting contrary to the intention of human nature. humans, creatures with a moral nature, are created for love in relationships and community with each other and with God.