

Appreciating Animals

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For quite a number of years now I have been developing a list of qualitative differences between humans and animals. Whenever I come across a saying, I will immediately record it along with the name of the speaker or writer. It's not a very scholarly list, since, among others, I do not include the precise original source, even though the names of many scholars are on the list.

Human beings are superior to animals in the field of politics (Aristotle), labour (Hegel and Marx), laughing and lying (Fahner), doubting (Kierkegaard), culture (Van Peursen), and self-awareness (Graham). Some observations are so superficial that they are comical and thus believable, such as smoking (Coupland), blushing (Twain), have sex facing each other (Velema-Drent), or change their dress (Komrij). Of course, the idea that the alleged higher elements of humans actually correspond to what is higher *an sich* is not missing: religion (Calvin), cursing (Dostoyevsky) or the image of God (Hayward).

The purpose of this list for me was a way of undermining evolution theory. If humans evolved from animals, there can be no principial differences, only gradual ones. As some evolutionists do their best to prove that animals "also" have intelligence, lingual ability or technology at their disposal, So I did my utmost to guard the borders as strictly as possible. After all, no animal is so stupid as to think there are no genuine differences between them and humans. No dog will ever try to organize a Party for People. Well, at least the thought cramp that afflicted me while I stood on the barricades between them, was typically human.

¹Original title: "Over waardering van dieren." Transl. Jan H. Boer. *Sophie* 3/2013, p. 15.

But recently it suddenly occurred to me that humans with respect to their religious or pistical aspect are not naturally superior to animals. In their relationship to God, animals are both object and subject. An assortment of Bible texts points in that direction. For example, God preserves animals (Genesis 6-9, Jonah 4:11, Psalm 36:6); animals call upon God (Psalm 104:21, Joel 1:20).

I am horrified by the Dutch Party for Animals as a one-issue party, but its interests in animals is a point that Christians in their elevated thinking have in the past forgotten.

I am going to start another list: In what aspect are animals superior to humans? I've already got a beginning: They cannot smoke, curse or lie.