

Moral status of animals in the ancient world

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Moral status of animals in the ancient world Main articles: Moral status of animals in the ancient world and Human exceptionalism Michelangelo's The Creation of Adam. The Book of Genesis echoed earlier ideas about divine hierarchy, and that God and humankind share traits, such as intellect and a sense of morality, that non-humans do not possess. Modern views of humans treatment of animals can be traced back to the ancient world.

The idea that the use of animals by humans—for food and clothing is morally acceptable, springs from many sources. There is a hierarchy based on the theological concept of "dominion," in Genesis (1: 20-28), where Adam is given "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Although the concept of dominion need not entail property rights, it has, over the centuries, been interpreted to imply some form of ownership. [8][10] Other parts of the Bible strongly protest the abuse of animals, such as Balaam and the talking donkey in Numbers 22: 28-33 [11] or the merciful command in Deuteronomy 25: 4 to allow an Ox to feed whilst it treads the grain [12]. In the New Testament, the dove is used to represent the Holy Spirit of God in Matthew 3: 16[13] and in Revelations 14: 1, 17: 14 and John 1: 29,[14] Jesus is described as a lamb; these two animals are still depicted in some churches with respect [15][16], thus showing ancient influence in modern religion.

At the same time, animals have been considered inferior because they lack rationality and language, and as such are worthy of less consideration than humans, or even none. [8][10]. Aristotle considered animals to have no rationality, but that they had a soul. [edit]17th century: Animals as automata <https://assignbuster.com/moral-status-of-animals-in-the-ancient-world/>

[edit]1641: Descartes Further information: Dualism (philosophy of mind) and Scientific Revolution Descartes' remains influential regarding how the issue of animal consciousness—or as he saw it, lack thereof—should be approached. 17] “[Animals] eat without pleasure, cry without pain, grow without knowing it; they desire nothing, fear nothing, know nothing. — Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715)[18]” The year 1641 was significant for the idea of animal rights. The great influence of the century was the French philosopher, Rene Descartes (1596–1650), whose *Meditations* was published that year, and whose ideas about animals informed attitudes well into the 21st century. 17] Writing during the scientific revolution—a revolution of which he was one of the chief architects—Descartes proposed a mechanistic theory of the universe, the aim of which was to show that the world could be mapped out without allusion to subjective experience. The senses deceive, he wrote in the First Meditation in 1641, and “it is prudent never to trust wholly those who have deceived us even once. [19] “ Hold then the same view of the dog which has lost his master, which has sought him in all the thoroughfares with cries of sorrow, which comes into the house troubled and restless, goes downstairs, goes upstairs; goes from room to room, finds at last in his study the master he loves, and betokens his gladness by soft whimpers, frisks, and caresses. There are barbarians who seize this dog, who so greatly surpasses man in fidelity and friendship, and nail him down to a table and dissect him alive, to show you the mesaraic veins! You discover in him all the same organs of feeling as in yourself.

Answer me, mechanist, has Nature arranged all the springs of feeling in this animal to the end that he might not feel? — Voltaire (1694–1778)[20] ” His

mechanistic approach was extended to the issue of animal consciousness. Mind, for Descartes, was a thing apart from the physical universe, a separate substance, linking human beings to the mind of God. The non-human, on the other hand, are nothing but complex automata, with no souls, minds, or reason. They can see, hear, and touch, but they are not, in any sense, conscious, and are unable to suffer or even to feel pain. [17] In the Discourse, published in 1637, Descartes wrote that the ability to reason and use language involves being able to respond in complex ways to "all the contingencies of life," something that animals clearly cannot do. He argued from this that any sounds animals make do not constitute language, but are simply automatic responses to external stimuli. [21] [edit]1635, 1641, 1654: First known laws protecting animals Richard Ryder writes that the first known legislation against animal cruelty in the English-speaking world was passed in Ireland in 1635.

It prohibited pulling wool off sheep, and the attaching of ploughs to horses' tails, referring to "the cruelty used to beasts," which Ryder writes is probably the earliest reference to this concept in the English language. [22] In 1641, the year Descartes' Meditations was published, the first legal code to protect domestic animals in North America was passed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. [23] The colony's constitution was based on The Body of Liberties by the Reverend Nathaniel Ward (1578–1652), a lawyer, Puritan clergyman, and University of Cambridge graduate, originally from Suffolk, England. [24] Ward listed the "rites" the Colony's general court later endorsed, including rite number 92: "No man shall exercise any Tyranny or Crueltie toward any brute Creature which are usuallie kept for man's use. "

Historian Roderick Nash writes that, at the height of Descartes' influence in Europe, it is significant that the early New Englanders created a law that implied animals were not unfeeling automata. [25] The Puritans passed animal protection legislation in England too.

Katheen Kete of Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut writes that animal welfare laws were passed in 1654 as part of the ordinances of the Protectorate—the government under Oliver Cromwell, which lasted 1653–1659—during the English Civil War. Cromwell disliked blood sports, particularly cockfighting, cock throwing, dog fighting, as well as bull baiting and bull running, both said to tenderize the meat. These could frequently be seen in towns, villages, in fairgrounds, and became associated for the Puritans with idleness, drunkenness, and gambling.

Kete writes that the Puritans interpreted the dominion of man over animals in the Book of Genesis to mean responsible stewardship, rather than ownership. The opposition to blood sports became part of what was seen as Puritan interference in people's lives, which became a leitmotif of resistance to them, Kete writes, and the animal protection laws were overturned during the Restoration, when Charles II was returned to the throne in 1660. [26] Bull baiting remained lawful in England for another 162 years, until it was outlawed in 1822. edit]1693: Locke John Locke argued against animal cruelty, but only because of the effect it has on human beings. Against Descartes, the British philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) argued, in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693, that animals do have feelings, and that unnecessary cruelty toward them is morally wrong, but—echoing

Thomas Aquinas—the right not to be so harmed adhered either to the animal's owner, or to the person who was being harmed by being cruel, not to the animal itself.

Discussing the importance of preventing children from tormenting animals, he wrote: " For the custom of tormenting and killing of beasts will, by degrees, harden their minds even towards men. "[27] [edit]18th century: The centrality of sentience, not reason Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued in 1754 that animals are part of natural law, and have natural rights, because they are sentient. [edit]1754: Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) argued in *Discourse on Inequality* in 1754 that animals should be part of natural law, not because they are rational, but because they are sentient: “[Here] we put an end to the time-honoured disputes concerning the participation of animals in natural law: for it is clear that, being destitute of intelligence and liberty, they cannot recognize that law; as they partake, however, in some measure of our nature, in consequence of the sensibility with which they are endowed, they ought to partake of natural right; so that mankind is subjected to a kind of obligation even toward the brutes.

It appears, in fact, that if I am bound to do no injury to my fellow-creatures, this is less because they are rational than because they are sentient beings: and this quality, being common both to men and beasts, ought to entitle the latter at least to the privilege of not being wantonly ill-treated by the former. [28]” [edit]1785: Kant “ Animals ... are there merely as a means to an end. That end is man. — Immanuel Kant[29]” The German philosopher Immanuel

Kant (1724-1804), following Augustine, Aquinas, and Locke, opposed the idea that humans have duties toward non-humans.

For Kant, cruelty to animals was wrong solely on the grounds that it was bad for humankind. He argued in 1785 that humans have duties only toward other humans, and that "cruelty to animals is contrary to man's duty to himself, because it deadens in him the feeling of sympathy for their sufferings, and thus a natural tendency that is very useful to morality in relation to other humans is weakened." [30] [edit]1789: Bentham Jeremy Bentham: "The time will come, when humanity will extend its mantle over every thing which breathes" (1781). 31] Four years later, one of the founders of modern utilitarianism, the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), although deeply opposed to the concept of natural rights, argued with Rousseau that it was the ability to suffer, not the ability to reason, that should be the benchmark of how we treat other beings. If rationality were the criterion, many humans, including babies and disabled people, would also have to be treated as though they were things. 32] He wrote in 1789, just as slaves were being freed by the French, but were still held captive in the British dominions: "The day has been, I grieve to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing, as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still. The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny.

The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason a human beings should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognized that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason or perhaps the faculty of discourse?

But a full-grown horse or dog, is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day or a week or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they reason? , nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer? [33]" [edit]1792: Thomas Taylor Despite Rousseau and Bentham, the idea that animals did or ought to have rights remained ridiculous.

When Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), the British feminist writer, published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, Thomas Taylor (1758—1835), a Cambridge philosopher, responded with an anonymous tract called *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*, intended as a *reductio ad absurdum*. Taylor took Wollstonecraft's arguments, and those of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1790), and showed that they applied equally to animals, leading to the conclusion that animals have "intrinsic and real dignity and worth," a conclusion absurd enough, in his view, to discredit Wollstonecraft's and Paine's positions entirely. 34] [edit]19th century: Emergence of *jus animalium* [edit]Legislation The first known prosecution for cruelty to animals was brought in 1822 against two men found beating horses in

London's Smithfield Market, where livestock had been sold since the 10th century. They were fined 20 shillings each. Further information: Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act 1822, Cruelty to Animals Act 1835, Cruelty to Animals Act 1849, and Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 “ What could be more innocent than bull baiting, boxing, or dancing? George Canning, British Foreign Secretary in April 1800 in response to a bill to ban bull baiting. [35]” Badger baiting was outlawed in England by the Cruelty to Animals Act 1835. Painting by Henry Thomas Alken, 1824 The 19th century saw an explosion of interest in animal protection, particularly in England. Debbie Legge and Simon Brooman of Liverpool John Moores University wrote that the educated classes became concerned about attitudes toward the old, the needy, children, and the insane, and that this concern was extended to non-humans.

Before the 19th century, there had been prosecutions for poor treatment of animals, but only because of the damage to the animal as property. In 1793, for example, John Cornish was found not guilty of maiming a horse after pulling its tongue out, the judge ruling that he could be found guilty only if there was evidence of malice toward the owner. [36] From 1800 onwards, there were several attempts in England to introduce animal welfare or rights legislation.

The first was a bill in 1800 against bull baiting, introduced by Sir William Pulteney, and opposed by the Secretary at War, William Windham, on the grounds that it was anti-working class. Another attempt was made in 1802 by William Wilberforce, again opposed by Windham, who said that the Bill

was supported by Methodists and Jacobins who wished, for different reasons, to "destroy the Old English character, by the abolition of all rural sports" and that bulls, when they were in the ascendant in the contest, did not dislike the situation. 37] In 1809, Lord Erskine introduced a bill to protect cattle and horses from malicious wounding, wanton cruelty, and beating, this one opposed by Windham because it would be used against the "lower orders" when the real culprits would be property owners. [38] Judge Edward Abbott Parry writes that the House of Lords found the proposal so sentimental that they drowned Erskine out with cat calls and cock crowing. [39] [edit]1822: Martin's Act Further information: Badger baiting, Bull baiting, and Cockfighting "If I had a donkey wot wouldn't go,

D' ye think I'd wollop him? No, no, no! But gentle means I'd try, d' ye see, Because I hate all cruelty. If all had been like me, in fact, There'd ha' been no occasion for Martin's Act. —Musichall ditty inspired by the prosecution under Martin's Act of Bill Burns for cruelty to a donkey. [40] "In 1821, the Treatment of Horses bill was introduced by Colonel Richard Martin, MP for Galway in Ireland, but it was lost among laughter in the House of Commons that the next thing would be rights for asses, dogs, and cats. 41] Nicknamed "Humanity Dick" by George IV, Martin finally succeeded in 1822 with his "Ill Treatment of Horses and Cattle Bill," or "Martin's Act", as it became known, the world's first major piece of animal protection legislation. It was given royal assent on June 22 that year as An Act to prevent the cruel and improper Treatment of Cattle, and made it an offence, punishable by fines up to five pounds or two months imprisonment, to "beat, abuse, or ill-treat any horse, mare, gelding, mule, ass, ox, cow, heifer, steer, sheep or other cattle.

"[42] Any citizen was entitled to bring charges under the Act. 43] The Trial of Bill Burns, showing Richard Martin with the donkey in an astonished courtroom, leading to the world's first known conviction for animal cruelty. Legge and Broome argue that the success of the Bill lay in the personality of "Humanity Dick," who was able to shrug off the ridicule from the House of Commons, and whose own sense of humour managed to capture its attention. It was Martin himself who brought the first prosecution under the Act, when he had Bill Burns, a costermonger—a street seller of fruit—arrested for beating a donkey.

Seeing in court that the magistrates seemed bored and didn't much care about the donkey, he sent for it, parading its injuries before a reportedly astonished court. Burns was fined, becoming the first person in the world known to have been convicted of animal cruelty. Newspapers and music halls were full of jokes about the "Trial of Bill Burns," as it became known, and how Martin had relied on the testimony of a donkey, giving Martin's Act some welcome publicity. [40][43] The trial became the subject of a painting (right), which hangs in the headquarters of the RSPCA in London. 44] Other countries followed suit in passing legislation or making decisions that favoured animals. In 1882, the courts in New York ruled that wanton cruelty to animals was a misdemeanor at common law. [23] In France in 1850, Jacques Philippe Delmas de Grammont succeeded in having the Loi Grammont passed, outlawing cruelty against domestic animals, and leading to years of arguments about whether bulls could be classed as domestic in order to ban bullfighting. [45] The state of Washington followed in 1859, New York in 1866, California in 1868, Florida in 1889. 46] In England, a series of

amendments extended the reach of the 1822 Act, which became the Cruelty to Animals Act 1835, outlawing cockfighting, baiting, and dog fighting, followed by another amendment in 1849, and again in 1876. [edit]1824: Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals “ At a meeting of the Society instituted for the purpose of preventing cruelty to animals, on the 16th day of June 1824, at Old Slaughter's Coffee House, St. Martin's Lane: T F Buxton Esqr, MP, in the Chair, It was resolved:

That a committee be appointed to superintend the Publication of Tracts, Sermons, and similar modes of influencing public opinion, to consist of the following Gentlemen: Sir Jas. Mackintosh MP, A Warre Esqr. MP, Wm. Wilberforce Esqr. MP, Basil Montagu Esqr. , Revd. A Broome, Revd. G Bonner, Revd G A Hatch, A E Kendal Esqr. , Lewis Gompertz Esqr. , Wm. Mudford Esqr. , Dr. Henderson. Resolved also: That a Committee be appointed to adopt measures for Inspecting the Markets and Streets of the Metropolis, the Slaughter Houses, the conduct of Coachmen, etc. etc, consisting of the following Gentlemen: T F Buxton Esqr. MP, Richard Martin Esqr. , MP, Sir James Graham, L B Allen Esqr. , C C Wilson Esqr. , Jno. Brogden Esqr. , Alderman Brydges, A E Kendal Esqr. , E Lodge Esqr. , J Martin Esqr. T G Meymott Esqr. A. Broome, Honorary Secretary [40][43] ” Further information: Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Richard Martin soon realized that magistrates did not take the Martin Act seriously, and that it was not being reliably enforced. Several members of parliament decided to form a society to bring prosecutions under the Act.

The Reverend Arthur Broome, a Balliol man who had recently become the vicar of Bromley-by-Bow, arranged a meeting in Old Slaughter's Coffee House in St. Martin's Lane, a London cafe frequented by artists and actors. [40] The group met on June 16, 1824, and included a number of MPs: Richard Martin, Sir James Mackintosh, Sir Thomas Buxton, William Wilberforce, and Sir James Graham, who had been an MP, and who became one again in 1826. They decided to form a " Society instituted for the purpose of preventing cruelty to animals," or the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, as it became known.

It determined to send men to inspect the Smithfield Market in the City of London, where livestock had been sold since the 10th century, as well as slaughterhouses, and the practices of coachmen toward their horses. [40] The Society became the Royal Society in 1840, when it was granted a royal charter by Queen Victoria, herself strongly opposed to vivisection. [47][48] [edit]1824: Early examples of direct action Noel Molland writes that, in 1824, Catherine Smithies, an anti-slavery activist, set up an SPCA youth wing called the Bands of Mercy.

It was a children's club modeled on the Temperance Society's Bands of Hope, which were intended to encourage children to campaign against drinking and gambling. The Bands of Mercy were similarly meant to encourage a love of animals. [49] Molland writes that some of its members responded with more enthusiasm than Smithies intended, and became known for engaging in direct action against hunters by sabotaging their rifles, although Kim Stallwood of the Animal Rights Network writes he has often heard these

stories but has never been able to find solid evidence to support them. 50] Whether the story is true or apocryphal, the idea of the youth group was revived by Ronnie Lee in 1972, when he and Cliff Goodman set up the Band of Mercy as a militant, anti-hunting guerrilla group, which slashed hunters' vehicles' tires and smashed their windows. In 1976, some of the same activists, sensing that the Band of Mercy name sounded too accommodating, founded the Animal Liberation Front. [49]