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ANIMALS. According to one prominent definition of the term *animal*, religion is both created for and practiced by animals, since humans are, in modern biological terms at least, incontrovertibly members of the animal family. But what of other animals, ranging from the simplest of creatures to domesticated work partners to large-brained, extravagantly wild creatures who exhibit emotional and intelligent lives in community? What part have these beings had in human religious life and belief?

Renewal of an Ancient Inquiry. At the very end of the twentieth century scholars of religion renewed and deepened the ancient inquiry into other living beings' place in religious traditions as a whole. As a result, twenty-first century scholarship on religion and animals continues to develop in a wide-ranging, inclusive, and interdisciplinary manner. It is now clearer than ever that the earth's nonhuman life-forms have from ancient times had a remarkable presence in religious beliefs, practices, images, and ethics. Engagement with these other lives ranges from the belief that some are divinities who bring blessings into the world to the conviction that the animals are merely unintelligent objects created by a divine power expressly for humans use.

Other biological beings' presence in the religious imagination has been neither static nor simple. Ivar Paulson observes that with the development of agriculture and animal domestication, "much of the earlier numinous power and holiness experienced by the

hunter in his encounter with the game was lost” (p. 213). This altered, non-spiritual status is carried through in the 1994 Catholic description of the place of nonhuman lives in the believer’s world: “Animals, like plants and inanimate things, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 2,415, p. 516).

The story of religion and animals goes well beyond accounts of their divinity on the one hand or subservience on the other. Held at times to be individuals in every sense that humans are individuals, and even ancestors, family, clan members, or separate nations, the life-forms outside the human species have regularly engaged humans at multiple levels, and thus at many times and places energized religious sensibilities dramatically.

A range of issues. Contemporary scholarship on the intersection of religious sensibilities and nonhuman animals undertakes the daunting task of engaging the entire gamut of humanity’s complex relationships with other biological lives. Beyond the familiar tradition of using animals for food and other material needs, nonhuman creatures have served as fellow travelers, communal society members and workers, and, often, intermediaries between the physical world and the supernatural realm. For many peoples, kinship with nonhumans has been maintained through dreaming and waking visions, as well as ritual ceremonies in which interspecies bonds are honored.

Many religious traditions have attempted to analyze the essence not only of human lives, but of the relationship between human and nonhuman lives and even the nature of

nonhuman animals' daily and existential realities. The historical Buddha is quoted on this subject often, as in this passage from the *Majjhima Nikaya*: "Men are indeed a tangle, whereas animals are a simple matter." The tendency of religious traditions to pass judgement on the value of animals' lives has had a profound impact on human thinking about the Earth and its other inhabitants. Historian of biology Ernst Mayr argues that Christianity has profoundly influenced biological matters because Christianity "abolished free thinking" by making "the word of God . . . the measure of all things" (p. 307). Mayr believed that Christianity was responsible for establishing Western culture's controlling assumptions about the important notion of species, and that a crucial change in the Christian worldview occurred during the Reformation by which species came to be seen as unalterably static rather than subject to development and change: "The fixity and complete constancy of species now became a firm dogma . . . [because a] literal interpretation of Genesis required the belief in the individual creation of every species of plants and animals on the days prior to Adam's creation" (p. 255).

His comments reflect the interest that many disciplines outside religious studies and theology have in the role religious traditions have played in developing many of our basic assumptions about nonhuman lives. Interest is also spurred by the recognition that although religions' relationships with animals are ancient, many religious traditions have, over time, narrowed their already minimal appreciation of nonhuman creatures. In the Western cultural tradition, for example, studies of animals by Christian theologians and interested believers have declined in the last few centuries. Nonhuman animals have been broadly dismissed in Western culture's secular circles through various developments

since the seventeenth century in philosophy (for example, Descartes's thesis that other living beings are more like clocks than like humans) and scientific experimentation (particularly powerful in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century).

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the place of food animals and laboratory animals in industrialized countries became increasingly that of a mere resource, even as dogs and cats were more and more frequently included as family members. Wild animals held an ambiguous position: sometimes thought of as pests or recreational hunting targets; sometimes as representatives of the natural world's power and majesty.

The forms of religion dominant in most societies where animal research and food production became key industries were amenable to such uses. In addition, religious institutions remained on the whole silent regarding environmental and habitat damage. As a result, in many ways religious institutions, like secular institutions, failed to notice or take seriously humans' profound and destructive impact on nonhuman lives.

Renewal and even deepening of the ancient inquiry into animals' place in religion occurred in response to this increasing crisis and for independent reasons as well.

Inquiries outside religious circles about nonhuman lives produced remarkable information that revealed some nonhuman animals to be decidedly more complex than Western culture and science held them to be. The findings of various biological sciences, for example, provided grounds for a more respectful evaluation of various animals' complex lives. When such details were noticed and taken seriously, the resulting openness had the potential to recreate ancient religious understandings about the human

community with other lives. Additionally, the interfaith dialogue of the second half of the twentieth century revealed deep concerns for the ethical dimensions of human interactions with other animals and highlighted religions such as Jainism and Buddhism that did not share the Western anthropocentric agenda.

The religions of the world have had, and will continue to have, a major impact on the way their adherents, as well as the secular world, look at the realities and moral responsibilities of the human interaction with other animals. Believers, religious leaders, scientists, and scholars of religion now have a much keener awareness of how engagement with other animals will reverberate in a multitude of issues.

Sources of complexity. Many of the issues surrounding religion's interaction with animals—ethical matters, symbolism, rituals—are, when considered individually, extraordinarily complex. Over the millennia, religious traditions have produced an astonishing variety of beliefs, factual claims, symbols, and actions on many everyday subjects. Even if the frame of reference is only a single tradition, views of nonhuman animals can, across time and place, be in significant tension.

Further complexities stem from living beings' significant differences from one another. Some are mentally, socially, and individually extremely simple; others are mentally and socially complex and so enigmatic that we may not be able to understand their lives at all. Ignorance of the features of other animals' lives has often led to crass oversimplifications both within and outside of religion. Such coarse caricatures are encouraged by the way

humans talk about other living beings, for upon careful examination much of our discourse about other animals is revealed to rely upon profoundly inaccurate descriptions of their lives.

Religious institutions, as enduring cultural and ethical traditions, have often been the primary source of answers to a fundamental question: “Which living beings really should matter to me and my community?” The field of religion and animals attempts to assess the many ways in which religious traditions formulate answers to this question, and, in their cultural milieux and beyond, influence how living beings outside the human species have been understood and treated.

The Role of Inherited Perspectives. The influence of traditional religious doctrines has caused many believers’ perspectives on nonhuman animals to be dominated by something other than a careful engagement with the animals themselves. Sometimes inherited preconceptions have taken the form of dismissive generalizations found in documents held to be revealed. Sometimes a one-dimensional sketch of a few local animals has operated as a definitive assessment of all nonhuman animals’ nature, abilities, and moral significance.

At other times, positive but inaccurate stories have operated similarly to obscure the actual realities of the local nonhuman animals. Custom and tradition that underlie inflexible claims about animals can present severe problems for historians, theologians,

and believers who wish to engage evidence that contradicts, in letter or spirit, a heritage of views that is inadequate or misleading when assessing empirical realities.

Animals as Symbols. Religious art, writing, dance, and oral traditions abound with images of the world's nonhuman living beings. Some are connected in one way or another to the animals portrayed, but many are not closely related to the animals whose images are used. Some studies of religion and animals have been confined solely to the study of such images, thus ignoring the actual biological beings themselves.

Stanley Walens observes that misinterpretations of animal symbols have plagued both anthropological and religious studies: "The tendency of Western scholars to ascribe to a particular animal symbol the meaning it has in Western culture is one of the fundamental errors of Western comparative theology." Scholars now recognize that the alleged simplicity of early and indigenous religions was more a by-product of the "coarse analytic methods of researchers and of the inability of the outsiders to capture the depth and complexity by which people in tribal societies are able to metaphorize themselves and their world" (Walens, p. 293).

Caution is thus in order when dealing with symbols that use nonhuman animal images, for as Walens reminds us, "The capable scholar must look very skeptically at the record of animal beliefs in pre-Christian societies" (294). In particular, the scholar must also be careful of purporting to talk about "animals" when what is being discussed are animal images that work primarily, even exclusively, to convey some feature of human

complexity rather than any information about the nonhuman beings whose images are being employed for human-centered purposes.

Ethical Concerns. Religion has traditionally been the cradle of humans' ability to exercise concerns for "others," a category that has historically included both humans and nonhumans. The study of religion and animals has been greatly complicated by the fact that some religious traditions insist that the universe of morally considerable beings includes all living beings, while others have had, ethically speaking, a pronounced human-centered bias, asserting that humans are the only living beings that really matter. While these competing claims differ radically in how far human concern should reach outside the human species, they share the conviction that humans are characterized by a profound ethical ability to care for others. Central questions in the study of religion and animals are thus these inherently ethical queries: "Who have the others been?" and "Who might the others be?"

Treatment of Other Animals. Because most religious traditions embrace the insight that actions speak more loudly about what one really believes than do words, any assessment of a religion's view of animals must be represented, at least in part, by some account of how it actually treats other living beings. If a religion features images of bulls in its temples but allows cattle to be treated with brutality in the world outside the temple, this gives us an important insight into their underlying beliefs. Another religion may prohibit the harsh treatment or killing of cattle but include no images of the animal in its worship, rituals, or material culture. The former may leave artifacts that suggest bulls were

important, but daily life in the latter suggests a more respectful engagement with cattle. Each religion engages with cattle in its own way. A careful analysis can provide much information about underlying social values.

Linked Oppressions. Religious traditions often suggest that when a human harms another living being, the actor and even other humans are desensitized, so that they may subsequently do even more harm (Thomas Aquinas made this argument, as did Immanuel Kant). This insight has been one of the classic justifications for traditions prohibiting cruelty to animals. Contemporary sociologists and law enforcement officials advance a modern version of this idea based on evidence that certain instances of human-on-human oppression, such as domestic violence, are psychologically linked with violence to nonhuman animals. A related insight is advanced by Oxford historian Keith Thomas, who suggests that in western Europe the domestication of animals “generated a more authoritarian attitude” and “became the archetypal pattern for other kinds of social subordination” (p. 46). The study of religion and animals can, when it addresses the idea that oppression of one kind of living being leads to the oppression of other kinds of living beings, be closely tied to social justice concerns that now are common features of religious institutions.

Transmission of Views About Animals. As carriers of a culture’s worldviews, religious traditions are ancient educators in cultural, ethical, social, ecological, intellectual, and political matters. In this role, religious traditions quite naturally have transmitted from generation to generation views of nonhuman animals, for the latter are inevitably around

and with us in our local communities. As suggested by Ernst Mayr, these views affect our most basic ideas about animals' nature, as well as their place in, or exclusion from, our communities of concern.

This feature of religion is always a highly contextualized piece in any religious tradition's larger puzzle, and an essential task in the study of religion and animals is to discover how a particular human community's engagement with the local world plays in its larger worldviews and lifeways.

Previous Scholarship on Religion and Animals. Greek and Roman thinkers were heir to a remarkable tradition of vigorous debate regarding whether nonhuman animals possessed mental and social abilities, including language, senses of justice and morality, and even reason. Richard Sorabji concludes that Augustine was the pivotal figure in shutting down this vibrant debate in the Hellenistic world. The result was a broad dismissal in the cultural tradition and, in particular, its religious institutions, regarding other animals' significance. Since the time of Augustine, the vast majority of scholarship in the Western intellectual tradition has gone forward on the assumption that humans alone are intellectually complex, capable of emotional depth and commitment, characterized by social connections and personality development, and able to develop the kinds of autonomy that moral beings intuitively respect.

This dismissal of animals, long a centerpiece in academic curricula and pedagogy, is now in tension with the rich information developed in the life sciences about animals' mental,

social, and emotional complexities. Even so, academic expression in the twenty-first century, including religious studies and theology, continues to reflect the anthropocentric bias of the Western tradition.

Believers' engagement with nonhuman lives is an ongoing challenge for religious pedagogy. Sociological studies reveal that ethical concern for nonhuman animals' welfare continue to have a place, subordinated though it may be at times, in the complex Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions as they carry their ancient ethical insights forward. Francis of Assisi and Albert Schweitzer are cited regularly as examples of believers with a profound concern for other animals. Influential figures like Rūmi, Maimonides, Ibn Taymiyah, and Isaac Bashevis Singer also included animal-friendly themes in their works, and Augustine's fellow Christians, including Ambrose of Milan, Basil of Caesarea, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and Thomas Berry, have in creative ways reflected their tradition's capacities for seeing and caring about living beings beyond their own species.

Thus, it is misleading to suggest that all who have thought about religion and animal issues have, naturally and obviously, dismissed nonhuman animals in the manner of the mainstream Western intellectual tradition that remains dominant today. The recent emergence of a more systematic and open-minded treatment of nonhuman animals in the doctrines, rituals, experiences, ethics, myths, social realities, and ecological perspectives of religious traditions suggests that when a clearer picture is drawn, it will be a rich tapestry of alternatives for interacting with the earth's nonhuman beings.

Institutionalized Religious Views: A Survey of World Religions. Anthropocentric biases continue to dominate many modern religious institutions' discourse generally, and their official pronouncements and conceptual generalities reflect the prevailing assumption that humans alone are the appropriate subjects of human ethics. Mainstream religious institutions have generally failed to challenge the frequently cruel way animals are treated in modern industrialized societies. There have been some challenges, mostly from indigenous traditions and those of the Indian subcontinent.

A survey of the views of nonhuman animals that dominate major religious traditions reveals that traditional and mainstream religious institutions have, on the whole, accepted not only humans' domestication of some animals for food and work, but also deprecated nonhuman animals generally and scorned the value of careful engagement with other animals' day-to-day realities. Such a survey also shows, however, that various subtraditions and prominent figures within the larger tradition often have questioned whether core values of the overall tradition aren't violated by both subordination and facile dismissals of nonhuman animals. It is not uncommon, then, for some part of religious traditions to have engaged nonhuman beings in some fuller way such that even if their place is not front and center in institutional pronouncements, ritual, or traditional language, nonhuman animals remain present and relevant to some believers' spiritual and ethical lives.

Hinduism. The Hindu tradition offers an immense range of views about the living beings who share our ecological community. Two general beliefs dominate Hindu conceptions

of the human relationship to other animals. First, human beings, recognized to be in a continuum with life, are considered the paradigm of what biological life should be—thus one often finds the hierarchical claim that human status is above that of any other animal. Second, belief in reincarnation, a hallmark of most Hindus' beliefs, includes the notion that any living being's current position in the cycle of life is a deserved position because it has been determined by the strict law of karma.

These two beliefs have resulted in an ambivalent view of animals. On the positive side, animals are understood to have souls and be worthy of ethical consideration; the notion of non-harming, or *ahimsā*, for example, applies to them. On the negative side, all of the earth's numerous nonhuman animals are understood to be inferior to any human.

According to the *sanātana dharma*, the eternal law and moral structure of the universe, all living beings, human and nonhuman, are born into that station in life for which their past karma has fitted them. Humans who in past lives acted immorally are destined to be born as nonhuman; an inferior life because animals' lives are thought of as particularly unhappy, at least compared to human existence.

The ambivalence toward nonhuman life is negative in the recurring implicit and explicit scorn shown to animals (as well as to lower caste humans). The positive side appears in the tradition's remarkable ethical sensitivity to other animals as beings who should not be killed. Many Hindu scriptures include the injunction that one should treat other animals exactly like one's own children. Central religious texts, such as the *Ṛgveda* and *Atharvaveda*, hold that the earth was not created for humans alone, but for other creatures

as well. Daily life in India, especially at the village level, provides many examples of coexistence with other animals, the best known of which is the sacred cow. There are, however, many examples of mistreatment as well.

Humans, even if Hindus believe them to have a privileged place in the hierarchy, are also believed to have special obligations to all living beings. This ethical claim is often buttressed by the close association of many Hindu deities with specific animal forms. Rāma and Krishna were thought to have reincarnated as a monkey and a cow. Ganesh, an elephant-headed god, and Hanuman, the monkey god, have long been worshipped widely in India.

Historically, around 500 B.C.E. the animal sacrifice that dominated the ritual life of the brahminical tradition was challenged by Buddhists and Jains as cruel and unethical. This challenge had a great effect on the later Hindu views of the morality of intentionally sacrificing other animals, and *ahimsā*, the historically important emphasis on nonviolence, has now become a central feature of the tradition.

Buddhism. Buddhist ideas about nonhuman animals share many features with Hindu views, because both reflect cultural assumptions that dominated the religions of the Indian subcontinent. For example, all animals, human and otherwise, are viewed as fellow voyagers in *samsāra*, the world of ceaseless flux and perpetual repetition of birth, death, and rebirth. Compassion toward other animals has often produced expressions of

concern for other living beings in Buddhist literature that lead many believers and scholars to claim that Buddhism takes a kind, sympathetic view toward nonhuman lives.

Alongside this very visible feature of the Buddhist tradition, however, sit complicating features, for in important ways Buddhism has a negative view of nonhuman animals' existence and abilities. Buddhist thinking groups all nonhuman animals into a single realm or category, which in the hierarchical social structure that dominated the Indian subcontinent meant that other forms of life were inferior to the human realm. Hence, the very fact that a being is born as any animal other than human is thought of negatively.

The animal world is viewed as an unhappy place—as the historical Buddha said in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, “so many are the anguishes of animal birth.” Birth at a “subhuman” level in the Buddhist hierarchy is conceived to be the direct result of less-than-ideal conduct. A human who violates moral norms is constantly threatened with punishment in the next life as a lower animal. Nonhuman animals are regularly described by Buddhists as so simple relative to humans that their lives are easily understood by the superior human intellect. Buddhist scriptures characterize animals as pests who are in competition with their human superiors.

Even though these factors lead to descriptions of animals in the Buddhist scriptures that seem fundamentally negative, these views are moderated by central ethical commitments. The First Precept states that a Buddhist will refrain from killing any life forms. Some portions of the tradition, though not all, emphasize vegetarianism as a means to this end.

The well-known *bodhisattva*'s vow to refrain from entering nirvana until all beings are saved reflects one prominent feature of the Buddhist tradition's deep concern for beings outside the human species.

Buddhist engagement with other animals, then, is a mixture of the tradition's heavy investment in hierarchical thinking and a strong ethical commitment to the value of life in all its forms. Despite all its avowed respect for nonhuman lives, however, the tradition has never emphasized seeing other animals in terms of their own realities. This leads to a dismissive prejudgment of animal life which is undermined by careful engagement with animals' actual lives.

The Abrahamic Traditions. Just as the religions of the Indian subcontinent share many common assumptions, the views dominating the Abrahamic traditions also have important assumptions in common. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are dominated in many essential respects by what amounts to ethical anthropocentrism, that is, a pronounced tendency to focus on the members of the human species as if they alone should be the object of ethical and moral protection. It is a fundamental article of faith in the Abrahamic traditions is [ED: strike this extra "is"] that the world was designed by a divine creator who elevated the human species above all other forms of life. This human-centeredness, which manifests itself in a tendency to justify practices that harm other animals, is moderated at critical points, as when sacrificial rules mandate that the victim's death be brought about as quickly as possible.

Judaism. Ideas about nonhuman animals are not simple in the Judaic tradition, in part because the Hebrew Bible contains diverse and even contradictory views of humans in relation to other living beings. A prominent model focuses on the importance of keeping humans safe from dangerous animals. A more utopian vision is that of peace with and among wild animals, which can also function as a metaphor for cosmic and social peace among humans. Of these two views, the first dominates, for human interests are characteristically seen in Judaism as far more important than animals' interests. Richard Bauckham has noted that the idea that humans need "peace from evil animals" is an "ancient tendency" stemming from the Jewish tradition's decision to see "wild animals primarily as threats to human life" (p. 8).

Philo Judaeus, a first-century Jewish historian, employed an image of a continuous warfare by the animals against humankind. This negative image of animals who are not under human control is contrasted with the tranquility of humans' relationship with, and domination of, domesticated animals. There is some irony in this view, for the notion that wild animals are evil, a common biblical theme, is rooted in the belief that disorder in nature stems from archetypal wrongs committed by human ancestors and the unfaithfulness of Israel.

Alongside the Hebrew Bible's dominant view that wild animals are evil is the countervailing notion that other animals were created by God, who is proud of them (as expressed in various passages in Job) and daily feeds them. Living under God's reign, other living beings at times appear as examples of right order, in great contrast to

humans. Many provisions, such as the law codes (Exodus 22–23 and 34, Leviticus 22 and 25, and Deuteronomy 14–26) recognize the welfare of other animals, at least to some extent. Such provisions are limited, however, to primarily (1) the welfare of domestic animals, that is, those that work for or produce benefits for humans, and (2) restrictions on how sacrificial animals could be killed.

Although scholars like Stephen Webb argue that the practice of animal sacrifice benefited nonhuman animals in general, the practice raises complex issues, for animal sacrifice functioned as an institutionalized means of atoning for human violations of moral rules or purity taboos. The fact that nonhuman beings suffer because of human wrongs is, of course, related to the human evaluation of human and nonhuman lives. Why only those animals useful to humans were chosen for sacrifice is worth further inquiry into the role that anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism play in the general practice of animal sacrifice.

Judaism arose in geographical areas that afforded believers only limited exposure to the most complex nonhuman animals (such as elephants, chimpanzees, whales, and dolphins), a fact which may account for its sometimes one-dimensional view of nonhuman lives. Jewish materials, nonetheless, particularly by virtue of the body of traditional Jewish law that concerns itself with animal welfare known as *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*, provides a basis for arguing that care for other animals of all kinds is mandated by the core values and insights of the tradition.

Nonhuman forms of life are mentioned in some of the covenants found in the Hebrew Bible, including the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9: 9–16. Some theologians, such as Andrew Linzey, who argues that Christians have a theological duty to protect nonhuman animals, make a great deal of this in their works. Others have argued that the larger context, including the preceding set of verses (Genesis 9: 1–7, which mentions that “the dread of you shall be upon every beast” and “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you”), radically qualifies the significance of nonhuman animals’ inclusion in the covenant established in Genesis 9: 9–16 and reflects that other animals are “in the subordinate relationship to humankind which has already been set forth in Genesis” (Murray, pp. 33–34).

Yet even if humans are conceived in the Jewish tradition as separate from the rest of life in critically important ways, an important sense of connection remains by virtue of the sheer number of specific animals mentioned and observations about the variety of life found throughout the Hebrew Bible—for example, Psalm 104, which mentions so many different kinds of animals in so many different contexts. Such variety and specificity suggest that the early Hebrews noticed and appreciated the extraordinary diversity and interconnectedness of human and nonhuman beings.

Christianity. The Christian tradition inherited and developed the Hebrew vision of humans as distinct from all other animals. Some believe the Christian tradition narrowed this heritage by its handling of the biblical claim that all humans, and only humans, are made in the image of God and have been given dominion over the earth. Some early

proponents of Christianity, including Origen and Augustine, asserted that part of Christianity's basic message is a fundamental, radical division between human animals and all other animals. In important ways, this has led to the exclusion of all other animals' interests when they are in conflict with even minor, unnecessary human interests.

Historically, the expression and development of Christian views of animals reflects ties to both Hebrew and Greek sources. Early Christians borrowed from them their fundamental cultural assumptions. The result over time was an amalgam in which connections to nonhuman animals were subordinated to human superiority. Ultimately humans came to be seen as distinct in every relevant way from other animals, and therefore ontologically superior to the rest of creation.

This led prominent sects within Christianity to persistently refuse to examine other animals' realities. The extent of the denial can be seen in the comment made by Pope Pius IX to English antivivisectionist Anna Kingsford: "Madame, humankind has no duties to the animals." Pius IX backed this up by "vigorously" opposing the establishment of a society for the protection of animals in Rome (p. 149).

Christianity faces a basic challenge from the developing body of knowledge about nonhuman animals. Based on data from the biological sciences and an appreciation of indigenous cultures' respectful engagement with life outside our species, many people now argue that at least some nonhuman life forms are proper objects of human morality.

It remains to be seen whether the Christian or any religious tradition will find ways to integrate new factual information into their views of nonhuman creatures.

Islam. Islamic views often reflect the Abrahamic emphasis on humans as the centerpiece of a created universe, but Islam also shows a countervailing recognition of the moral dimension of the very existence of other animals. Even though the Qur^{ān} frequently asserts that other animals have been placed on Earth solely for the benefit of humans, how humans treat other animals, who are deemed creatures of Allah, also plays an important role in the tradition. The Qur^{ān} and other central writings of Islam reflect numerous ways in which believers have recognized that other animals have their own importance. For example, *sūrah* 6:38 states that other animals have their own communities: “There is not an animal in the earth, nor a flying creature on two wings, but they are communities like unto you.” Mohammed himself commented, “Whoever is kind to the creatures of Allah, is kind to himself.” He also compared the doing of good or bad deeds to other animals to similar acts done to humans.

The result is that there are both negative and positive views of other animals at the center of the complex Islamic tradition. As with Judaism, the ritualized slaughter of animals for food (*dhabh*) reflects the basic belief that humans are divinely appointed representatives of Allah (*Khalīfa*, often translated as vicegerent or steward). This is one version of the claim that other animals, even if not on earth solely for human use, are subordinate to humans and in special instances ordained for human use.

Although humans are, in the Islamic tradition, the centerpiece of creation and thus the most important living beings, ethical sensibilities regarding other animals are still prominent, as in the rules governing the humane killing of sacrificial animals. Thus, the Islamic tradition provides moral space, as it were, for the view that other animals have an integrity and inherent value of their own.

The Animal Presence Outside the World Religions. Views of the place of animals in human lives are far different outside the mainstream religions. Native or indigenous traditions worldwide often reflect a spiritual kinship with many kinds of nonhuman living beings. John Neihardt begins the now-famous account *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* with observations about sharing and kinship with other animals: “It is the story of all life that is holy and is good to tell, and of us two-leggeds sharing in it with the four-leggeds and the wings of the air and all green things; for these are children of one mother and their father is one Spirit” (p. 1).

Communication with specific kinds of animals, often mammals or birds known to be highly social and intelligent, such as dolphins or ravens, are often found in nature-oriented spiritual traditions. Most show a deep concern for and connection with nonhuman animals as fellow beings or even as individuals not unlike humans. Many contemporary nature-oriented religions, which tend to be decentralized and to give primacy to individual experience, emphasize nonhuman animals. Relatedly, respected members of contemporary scientific communities, such as primatologist Jane Goodall

and cognitive ethologist Marc Bekoff, have emphasized the relevance to human spiritual quests of studying and understanding animal behaviour. Noticing and taking nonhuman animals seriously is also evident in the Chinese folk, Daoist, and Confucian traditions, Japanese *Shintō*, the Jain tradition of India, Sikhism, and many other religious traditions that offer profound insights into the importance and ethical dimensions of the human connection with other natural beings.

Conclusion. Considering the seemingly simple question of how the two important topics of religion and animals intersect raises many possibilities. One of these is a deeper understanding of religious traditions' roles in shaping human concepts of, discourse about, and ethical engagements with the Earth and its nonhuman inhabitants. The religious component of a human interaction with other animals can offer significant personal value as well. An increasing number of theologians, ethicists, philosophers, poets, and scholars from many disciplines have echoed Thomas Berry's insight: "Indeed we cannot be truly ourselves in any adequate manner without all our companion beings throughout the earth. This larger community constitutes our greater self."

Anthropomorphism; Bears; Birds; Cats; Elephants; Evolutionism; Fish; Horses;
 Monsters; Rabbits; Snakes; Totemism; Tricksters: An Overview; Lady of the Animals;
 Lord of the Animals

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