Three Ways to Love an Animal

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Animals are in the news these days. As so often, the world of the image and the soundbite encourages muddle, and we need to take a step back if we are to sort and integrate our conflicting ideas and emotions Let me begin with a popular caricature of the animal-lover: he, or more probably she, keeps a garden full of goats and chickens; she takes a break at weekends to liberate the odd rat from its laboratory; and she spends the little spare time she has left in campaigning to save the rainforests. The caricature, however, soon begins to reveal its contradictions when we are faced with a concrete problem. Take, for example, the release of mink into the countryside by members of the Animal Liberation Front In this case, the people most affected, and most angered, by this action were those directly involved in the welfare of animals: farmers, conservationists and pet-owners. The problem with the 'liberation' of mink is, precisely, that it is bad for other animals; and it clearly reveals that concern for the welfare of animals is a complex business. Our lack of clarity about this complexity is the main reason why debate about issues such as fox-hunting has proved so confused and inconclusive.

In this article I shall describe three types of animal-lover, whom I shall nickname, for reasons that will become obvious, Libbie, Connie and Aggie. In exploring how, in their different ways, these three care for animals, I examine different possible ways of understanding the Christian claim that creatures are *good.* For the good, as St Thomas tells us, is that which all desire: to love is to recognise the object of your love as something good. Finally I shall argue that it is important to reintegrate the insights of the three into a single account of the good, which is complex but no longer confused.

Compassion and cruelty

We can all recognise Libbie, the 'animal liberationist'. Her concern is for the animals that humans mistreat on farms and in laboratories. She is probably a vegan, and opposes any direct physical exploitation of animals, for food, clothing, entertainment or medical experimentation, and especially anything that entails suffering or killing. If Libbie is philosophically inclined she will have plenty to read, for there is a huge literature on the ethics of inflicting suffering on animals.[1] The philosophers that Libbie favours tend to use the following strategy: they take a standard moral theory and extend its application from human beings to animals. So, for example, if you think that moral decisions should be made by weighing up pleasures and pains in a utilitarian calculus, then you include the pains and pleasures of animals in your calculus. If you think that what is important morally about human beings is that they are the bearers of rights, then you argue that animals too are bearers of rights. Every human being indeed has a right not to be tortured; but why stop at human beings? Surely cats and rats and pigs also have a right not to be tortured? (At this point I am not evaluating this philosophical strategy, merely trying to explain it.)

Why, you might ask, should we extend the range of ethical theory beyond human beings? Libbie would argue that we treat human beings as objects of ethical consideration because certain relevant criteria apply to them; and these criteria also apply to at least some animals. You should not beat innocent human beings because they feel pain; so do most animals. You should not imprison innocent human beings because they naturally range freely; so do most animals. Libbie might go on to develop similar arguments based on the claim that animals suffer from loneliness and boredom, have their own natural goals and projects which might be frustrated, are subjects of their own lives, and so on.

Libbie wants to extend the range of human ethics, but she is not arguing that animals themselves should behave according to human morality. Her point is one about how we human beings should act towards animals. It is also, importantly, about our direct, rather than indirect, treatment of animals: farms and factories are her target, not vanishing meadows or marshlands.

So far I have said nothing about goodness. In the ethical theories that Libbie is using, ‘good’ tends to refer to the character of the human agent: we are good when we observe the utilitarian calculus, or the rights due to others. What about the animals themselves? Are they good in Libbie’s eyes? They are not moral agents, and Libbie does not readily use the word good in a non-ethical sense. But perhaps we can push her on this point. For Libbie, surely, thinks that the well-being of an animal is valuable in itself. If she begins from the point-of-view of utility, she will agree that it is better if an animal is comfortable and pain-free than the opposite. If she begins from the standpoint of rights, she will agree that it is better for an animal to be free from human interference.

Furthermore, the more closely that Libbie considers the well-being of the animals from these respective viewpoints, the more complex and rich will be her account of the relevant utility or rights. For example, the utilitarian will begin to take into consideration the creature’s need to engage in patterns of activity natural to its species (such as scratching for a hen); the rights theorist will want to include a range of lesser rights required if the animal is to be self-determining (once more an example might be scratching for a hen). Whichever language Libbie uses, in short, she will develop an account which demands moral respect for a whole range of behaviours that are part of the life of a healthy flourishing animal.

In this way the respective positions of utilitarianism and of rights theory will converge, and they will converge towards an account that is, in fact, broadly Aristotelian. Here, the well-being of an animal will be described in terms of the complex lifestyle of a mature healthy specimen, and is seen as the animal's *telos,* its goal or purpose. For Aristotle, the telos of an animal was good, both subjectively (for the animal) and objectively (in itself). Libbie's moral theorising implicitly requires us, as independent agents, to recognise the external, objective, goodness of the well-being of other animals.

Each of my three characters can be corrupted, and the corruption of each leads to parodies which contribute to intellectual confusion. Libbie is corrupted when she focuses so much on the sufferings of individual animals that she forgets the wider context.[2] She ignores not only the social and economic impact of, say, releasing mink, but even the ecological system which the mink might threaten. (Strictly speaking, a utilitarian approach to animal welfare ought to take all consequences into account, although it is not at all clear how the relevant calculations could be made. It is unsurprising therefore that the individualist language of 'animal rights' has come to dominate Libbie's rhetoric.) A corrupted Libbie will end up acting in a way that indirectly causes suffering even to animals, or threatens the rights even of animals, quite as much as the human beings who are the target of her hostility.

Beauty and Balance

My second character is Connie, the conservationist.[3] Connie has no special interest in animals that are furry and domesticated. She may love elephants or crocodiles, sea-slugs or soldier-ants. In any case, she cares about not individual animals but populations, the survival of species, the amazing variety of living creatures, each adapted to its own niche. Consequently, she cares in particular about habitats. Connie is less concerned whether human beings affect animals directly than how they affect them indirectly, by damaging, or alternatively sustaining, their habitat. Where Libbie cares about individuals, Connie values systems, in their interrelations, variety and balance.

Connie's practical choices will often contrast strikingly with those of Libbie.[4] Libbie, for example, will not wear leather shoes, because she disapproves of farming cattle. Connie is reluctant to wear plastic shoes, because she is aware of the problem of disposing of non-biodegradable waste. Sometimes the contrast can lead to direct conflict: Libbie would always oppose killing, but Connie would cull red deer in the Scottish Highlands to protect the trees and grass, or exterminate immigrant rats in the Philippines in order to preserve the threatened local populations of ground-nesting birds.

The language of goodness is more straightforwardly congenial to Connie than to Libbie. Because her approach is biological, she can make immediate use of Aristotle's insight that the goodness of an animal consists in its flourishing; and that it is (objectively) a good thing that such animals should exist. This understanding of goodness also corresponds to Connie's interest in variety, as the good of each animal is species-relative and distinctive. However, because of the developments in biology since Darwin, Connie needs to move beyond Aristotle, in two ways at least.

Firstly, Connie needs to be able to explain the goodness not simply of individuals, but of social groups, of populations and of eco-systems. She sees an individual as intrinsically related to and inter-dependent with others. Indeed, she will argue that it does not really make sense to consider the goodness of an individual animal in isolation. For all animals are dependent on a variety of other living things for their survival; and for many animals sociability is intrinsic to their identity ('one chimpanzee is no chimpanzee,' to quote an expert on primates). As a consequence, Connie will also see the goodness of an individual from different points-of-view: the goodness of a mouse considered in itself is its own flourishing; considered from the point-of-view of the kestrel, it is its edibility. In fact, Connie will come to recognise that almost all harms can from a different point-of-view be seen as goods.

How will Connie begin to explain the goodness of the systems that she values? She will use the language of balance, sustainability, integrity and interdependence. A system will be good if it works and keeps going. Individuals and sub-groups will flourish insofar as they are adapted to their surroundings and therefore fit the system. Connie is likely to describe the fragile balance of inter-related individuals and systems as beautiful.

There is a second way in which Connie will need to develop Aristotle's account of goodness. Modern biology has revealed that Aristotle was wrong to believe that there are unchanging species. Both species and habitats are gradually co-evolving. Connie needs to be able to explain the goodness not of a static system, but of one that changes over time.

Does that mean that it makes no sense to talk of things as being good as they are? If we know that species naturally change and develop, *rise and die, why should we try to conserve them?* If you value the system as a whole, how can you value its present parts, or the way the system happens to be configured at the moment? For it is a part of the dynamic system that its parts will be destroyed. Competition, conflict and extinction, after all, played an integral role in Darwin's account of natural selection.

Connie may reasonably argue that it is consistent for her to value both the parts and the whole. Once more, she will use the strategy of distinguishing between different aspects of goodness: the dinosaurs, she may argue, were good in themselves, good as a part of their contemporary ecosystem, and also good in their contribution to the evolutionary story of which they were a part. Conservationists need simultaneously to respect and preserve a presently existing balance and beauty, while also recognising that the present situation does not constitute a timeless ideal. The gradually changing world will develop into other, equally fragile and perhaps equally beautiful, conditions of balance and relative stability. An analogy might be the beauty of a piece of music: each individual note may be beautiful and each chord beautiful, yet the notes and the chords also borrow their beauty from, and lend their beauty to, the tune of which they are a part.

In other words, the notion of goodness adequate for Connie's concerns is complex: it needs to encompass the integrity and flourishing of individual parts and their relationality, balance and interdependence within a developing system; the parts, and the wholes, on their own and in relationship, and each in their developing stages, will all have a goodness and beauty that Connie values.

Connie too can be corrupted. She can become so focused on the whole that she can dismiss the value of the parts, except insofar as they contribute to the whole. Human beings in particular seem to Connie to pose a problem: if they are treated as simply another part of the system, they will control the direction of ecological development until nothing remains but them and their domestic animals. Consequently, Connie is tempted to regard them not as a healthy part of the system, but as an unwanted and dangerously powerful parasite. A corrupted Connie may go so far as to argue that the world would be better off without human beings altogether. However, as with Libbie, the corruptions of Connie's position lead to internal contradiction. For if she values the variety and richness of biological life, then surely human beings will add to that variety and richness. If she is fascinated by the distinctive intelligence and creativity of a chimpanzee, then why not also of a human being? No consistent Connie, however non-anthropocentric she may be, could see the human race eliminated without serious regret.

Using with Care

We could survive as a society, and a race, without Libbie. We could survive in the short term, at least, without Connie. All of us, however, in order to live through the next few weeks, need Aggie. Yet she is the most neglected and the least discussed of all animal-lovers. When the Aggies of the North country and the West country, along with their husbands and brothers and fathers and sons, descended suddenly on Hyde Park in the summer of 1997, one journalist aptly quoted G.K.Chesterton's poem 'The Secret People':

> 'Smile at us, pay us, pass us, but do not quite forget,
> For we are the people of England, that have not spoken yet.'

Since then, the Countryside Alliance has done something to remind us of the existence of the farmers who feed us (albeit by suggesting that their primary concern is fox-hunting).

Philosophers as well as journalists have neglected Aggie, the agriculturalist. They have helped Libbie explain her concerns, in the language of animal rights or of utilitarianism. They have developed arguments about goodness and value to help Connie put her case. Both of those moves affect Aggie; but the philosophers have done nothing to help her in her turn to explain or understand what she is trying to do, and how it is that she cares for animals, and for the land on which they live.[5] Here is an irony indeed; for not only is Aggie the most essential of the three for our own survival, she also affects the lives of animals dramatically, directly of those she is breeding, and indirectly of those that might live upon the land which she manages. If Connie and Libbie are serious, she is the first person to whom they should be listening. But before they can do that, we will need to give her a language.

Aggie's relationship to her animals is a part not of a hobby or of a campaign but of a way of life. What she seeks from the philosopher is an ethics by which to live, a description, perhaps, of the virtues intrinsic to the good practice of her sort of life. This will in its turn imply a set of beliefs about the kind of things her animals are, and how and why they should be treated in certain ways. As we explore how Aggie in practice regards animals, we will discover that her implicit view is complex and nuanced, and holds in tension apparently conflicting elements. For all that, it is not necessarily either muddled or malevolent.

The most obvious thing about Aggie is that she makes use of her animals. She does so in a variety of ways: she may shear or milk them, or collect their eggs; she may kill them for food or clothing; she may employ them as co-workers. Furthermore, she makes use of the land that is the habitat of wild animals (some of which she attempts to control as pests).

Is it simply a mistake to describe Aggie as an animal-lover? Is it possible to love the things that you use? We might compare Aggie with a craftsman who makes use of a tool or an instrument. It seems that he values this not for its own sake, but for the external goods it helps him to produce. One might reply: why may he not care for it on its own account too? At the very least an instrument is not normally abused or neglected by a skilled craftsman. Far from it: he will attend meticulously to his tools to ensure that they always fulfil their specific function smoothly and easily. The case is very clear with a musical instrument: the expert violinist will lavish immense care (and indeed money) on his violin.

To do this is neither sentimental nor purely utilitarian. It is not sentimental, because the violinist is not pretending that his violin is something else, say a small child or a pet hamster. He cares for it precisely as a violin, so that it may continue to function as well as possible as a violin. His care for his instrument is not simply utilitarian in this sense: *qua* violinist he does not value his violin for the sake of a further end that is extrinsic to his violin (say, to make money). He values it for the sake of an activity in which the violin functions most fully as the thing that it is, i.e. making music. *Qua* violinist he values the violin more not because it costs more, but because it makes better music. An instrument may, therefore, be appreciated for the thing that it is, not simply for its external products, at least when the use of the instrument is integral to an activity that is intrinsically worthwhile.

It is not, of course, only inanimate things that we use. Aristotle categorises a type of friendship inspired by mutual usefulness, but argues that such friendships are easily broken. For in them we love friends merely for their usefulness. 'Hence when the reason for being friends has disappeared, the friendship itself disappears, as it exists only for the sake of that end.'[6] Aristotle is more interested in the 'perfect' type of friendship, that between good men who love each other for what they are. Yet even that sort of friendship, he admits, is useful to the virtuous friends. In practice, Aristotle's categories of friendship are rarely encountered neat: every time we smile at the postman and say 'Good day', we are both wishing well for his own sake, and taking pleasure in, a friend who stands to us primarily in a relationship of usefulness. Nor do we stop greeting the postman when he retires. In fact, familiarity with other human beings, whether they are useful to us or not, tends (all things being equal) to engender a stable mutual goodwill; for we are naturally sociable creatures. Again, the human beings most useful, or even necessary, to our well-being are likely to be those we love most for their own sake: our parents, spouses, children, close colleagues and close friends. There is nothing either psychologically or ethically improbable about caring for, for their own sake, others of whom we also make use.

Aristotle contrasted the love of inanimate things like wine, which is purely utilitarian, with the love of a friend for his own sake. I have suggested that the love even of an inanimate object need not be crudely utilitarian; I have also explored further Aristotle's own category of human friendship inspired by mutual usefulness. Domesticated animals are, of course, neither inanimate nor human: if it is inappropriate to love them as human beings, still less is it appropriate to love them in the same way as a glass of wine. Indeed, different animals are appropriately loved in different ways (most rabbits would prefer not to be fed Pedigree Chum). The farmer's love of an animal that he uses, I suggest, falls somewhere between the love of a human whose friendship we use and that of a craftsman who cherishes the instrument that is integral to his craft.

Both of these types of love involve an element of care or nurture; both require an understanding of the sort of thing that the object of our affection is and ought to be (in Aristotelian terms of its *telos*). Similarly, the farmer's use of his animals requires both the virtues of nurturing, and a true understanding of the nature of his charges. Not only is it possible for care and use to coexist; in fact, the two are linked. For the farmer can only use his animals if he cares for them so that they flourish, while both use and care depend upon his understanding of the animal's nature and well-being (and that understanding in its turn depends largely upon experience and familiarity).[7] A sign of this is the farmer's pride—obvious at any agricultural show—in his ability to nurture a fine and healthy example of the type of animal that he breeds.[8]

Alasdair MacIntyre discussed in *After Virtue* the virtues characteristically involved in different practices.[9] The virtues intrinsic to and particularly characteristic of a farmer's life, I have argued, would include understanding of, attentiveness to, and practical concern for the well-being of animals. (These in turn would require further virtues such as intelligence, clear-sightedness, industriousness, patience, responsibility and compassion.) It is worth noting that whereas Connie and Libbie are concerned primarily with how others should treat animals (their own distinctive ethical practices are normally indirect), Aggie embraces virtues which she herself must live out.

Aggie's relation to other animals cannot be categorised in any simple way. She interacts with at least four groups of animals in at least four ways. First come those animals on which I have so far focused, the stock for which she cares in order to harvest their produce. Secondly, she employs some animals as fellow-workers. Here, her use of animals involves respect and trust: she employs a sheep-dog or a plough-horse to cooperate in a job she knows that human beings cannot do on their own.[10] It is not surprising if this sort of relationship is the one most likely to engender a mutual affection and enjoyment that approaches most closely to human friendship. It is at least more intelligible for a shepherd to describe a sheepdog as his 'friend' than for someone to say this of his hamster.

Thirdly, Aggie share her land with a number of wild animals. She is likely to be familiar with some or all of these, and she may even regard them with affection. They are an integral part of the farm which is her home, and she will notice when the hares are displaying, or the swallows preparing to migrate.

Fourthly, she will see a certain range of animals as pests (the exact range will, of course, depend on her type of farming). She will need to control, perhaps exterminate, these animals. She may do so unemotionally, or with anger, or with respectful regret; her attitude will depend not on her views as a farmer, but on how far she sympathises also with Libbie's or Connie's understanding of animals. We should not be surprised, however, if she respects her animal competitors. In the first place she is, once again, likely to be familiar with these creatures. Secondly, her character as a farmer predisposes her to recognise the goodness of different types of flourishing animal lives.

Aggie experiences a range of animals in a range of different ways; in each case, however, her relationship is characterised by a degree of familiarity and understanding. Her relationship with her land will also be one shaped by knowledge born of familiarity: her farm is her home, a stable home by contemporary standards, and one whose every niche she will observe through the changing seasons of the year. Quite naturally Aggie will feel a depth of affection for her land that few mobile city-dwellers feel for theirs. Her natural desire (which may of course be over-ridden by other objectives) will be for that land to flourish.

For the philosopher who likes his theories to be elegantly simple, the ethics of farming for meat presents a further problem. Farmers, it appears, must both nurture, and also kill, if not their own animals, at least potential pests. The first thing to note about this paradox is simply that it exists: however we explain it ethically or psychologically, generation upon generation of farmers have killed the animals they have nurtured. Conversely, they have taken care to protect from suffering the animals they knew they would one day kill.

When Aggie sees such practice as part of the life of a good farmer she does not see herself as a schizophrenic. Rather, she believes that she is responding to an objective paradox, an irreducibly tragic element perhaps, of human life: that we live by the deaths of other creatures, including those we nurture and cherish. It is necessary for us at times[11] to kill, whether directly or indirectly. That grim fact, however, ought to be set in the context of respect and care.[12]

Whatever the difficulties with this account of the farmer's ethics, at the very least it has the great merit of making clear our biological dependency on the system of which we are a part. To pretend that we are able to live harmlessly is a delusion; the farmer forces us to recognise this. The good farmer suggests that even our destructiveness might be integrated into an ethics of decency and care.

Goodness for Aggie, then, like goodness for Connie, will be complex. She recognises the goodness of a healthy, flourishing cow. She recognises the goodness of a stable, flourishing meadow. She does so, though, not merely impersonally, but enjoying the further good of an intimate familiarity with her animals and land. At the same time, she knows that her role as a farmer requires her to see the usefulness of her animals and of her fields as a good. She is obliged to see one aspect of their relational goodness, the fact that they are good-for-humans, as privileged. Compared with Libbie (or even Connie) she is simultaneously both more likely to kill her animals, and more likely to treat them with practical affection.

Aggie, too, can of course be corrupted; and much of the hostility to her derives from mistaking her corrupted state for her true nature. Aggie is corrupted when she focuses only on utility, and begins to describe herself primarily as a businesswoman. There is, of course, nothing unique about her in this; one of the easiest ways to corrupt a working person is to force them to redescribe their calling as if it were merely a means to profit. As Walter Shewring elegantly argued, it is equally mistaken to pretend that the artist does not need paying, and to believe that his only motive is financial gain.[13]

A corrupted Aggie might begin to see her animals simply as manipulable raw material for her own ends, having no sensitivities or needs or purposes of their own. She might begin to think of her land as if it were a regimented city park, in which plants should grow to a predetermined design, weeds be ruthlessly uprooted, and no one walk on the grass. Aggie is liable to be corrupted not simply by the lure of profit, but also by the distancing effects of large-scale agriculture and stock-keeping, and of technology, which combine to weaken her natural sense of familiarity with her land and animals. Once again, Aggie's corruptions are likely to rebound upon her eventually; the long-term consequences of over-intensive farming and increasingly aggressive technological intervention will inevitably harm the farmers themselves.

To sum up so far: Libbie focuses on captive animals being ill-treated by humans, and finds goodness in their living a flourishing natural life. Connie focuses on wild animals and finds goodness in the beauty and balance of the ecological systems which sustain them, and of which they are a part. Aggie focuses on farms and finds goodness in the well-being of her animals and land, in the enjoyment of familiarity with them, and also in the use which human beings make of these.

Integrating the Three

I have sketched three different types of concern for animals, and it is clear that in practice they may often conflict. Is there any way of integrating the insights of all three into a larger picture? Let me start with Aggie: she makes clear to us, most fundamentally, that we too are part of a system, dependent upon other creatures to stay alive. She also reveals that there are good and bad ways of treating those creatures which we use. Aggie will not let us brush under the carpet the harsher realities underlying human survival; she asks us to face them and to develop an ethical account of them. She forces Libbie and Connie respectively to recognise that our agricultural use of animals and of their habitat cannot either be ignored or simply set beyond the moral pale.

What is Connie's distinctive contribution to the wider picture? Connie has already done a lot of philosophical work for us in taking Aristotle's biologically inspired idea of goodness and adapting it to the post-Darwinian biological context. She has helped us to explain how we might think of species as good even though we know that they are changing. She has also helped us to learn to talk about parts and wholes without seeing either one as simply there for the other: parts are valuable in themselves and for the whole; wholes valuable in themselves and for the parts. Connie has, in short, helped us to notice and articulate the value of interdependence, sustainability and systematic order.

Connie will encourage Libbie to look at the ecological implications of her own concern for animal welfare, and to recognise our need to respect systems as well as individuals. Similarly, she will remind Aggie that the whole world should not be seen as a farm. There is a need for land that is left as wilderness where species of plants and animal that cannot survive in a humanised landscape will be free to flourish. Aggie's domain may be large, but is should not be all-inclusive. Secondly, she will encourage Aggie's own desire for the health of her land, and help her to recognise ways in which she may farm with ecological sensitivity.

Libbie's particular strength lies in reminding us of the need to respect individual animals in our direct treatment of them. Furthermore, she insists that we humans are the sort of creature that can maltreat: we can be cruel in a sense that a cat toying with a blue tit cannot. On the one hand Libbie's arguments incorporate animals into our moral world: we are to respect them not insofar as they are different, but insofar as they are similar to us. On the other hand, her ethics requires a strong recognition of our difference from other animals: we are expected to recognise and restrain our capacity for cruelty and to respect our duties to other species.

Libbie will point out to Connie that creatures are valuable as individuals and not simply as part of a system. She will enable Connie to understand the distinctive role of human beings not as parasites, but as creatures with a unique capacity to sympathise with and take responsibility for the well-being of other creatures. Secondly, Libbie will remind Aggie of her own ideals of care, strengthening her commitment to the welfare of her animals and questioning any tendency to slip into a merely utilitarian approach to farming. In fact, both Libbie and Connie will function as moral gadflies to help Aggie guard herself against corruption. They can do this only by first acknowledging the ethical potential within Aggie's self-representation as a farmer, and then aiming to collaborate with her in maintaining and improving compassionate and ecologically sensitive farming practices. Indeed, the moral positions of Libbie and Connie make full sense only after that of Aggie has been articulated.

I began by suggesting that the popular picture of the animal-lover conflates the concerns of three distinctive viewpoints, and that the debate about issues such as fox-hunting is often muddled precisely because of this. I then explored these three viewpoints separately, before attempting to integrate their different concerns within a single overall account. But if the conflation of these three positions causes muddle, why, you may ask, do I attempt the difficult task of integrating them without muddle? Why not leave each position alone by itself? Why not let Libbie shut down our fur farms and medical laboratories and Connie protect our wildernesses, while Aggie carries on undisturbed and provides us with bread and chickens?

In practice, publicity has tended to focus on those issues which can be presented with least complication: on Libbie's rescue of beagles, or Connie's defence of rain-forests. There are, however, two reasons why it is crucial to integrate the three sets of insights. Most fundamentally, sheer intellectual honesty requires it: to ignore the true claims of any one position is philosophically negligent. Secondly, it is dangerous in practice to polarise the positions, for then Libbie and Connie will attend only to their own private interests and leave Aggie to slip into corruption. In other words, we will have (as, arguably, we actually do have) a society that idealises kindness to animals and the protection of uncontaminated wilderness while simultaneously living off cruel and ecologically damaging farming practices. To insulate Libbie and Connie is also to insulate Aggie; and to insulate Aggie is to abdicate moral responsibility for the fundamental processes by which we all stay alive.

There may be an interesting reason why farming and conservation have not been fully integrated within the philosophical debate. Although the environmental movement found its origins amid the fragile microclimates of the islands of the Indian Ocean,[14] it has been dominated by discussions in the United States. Ecologically and historically the States are atypical: a vast and lightly populated country into which, it appeared for a long time, expansion could be unlimited. The result was a very sharp contrast between the inhabited land within the frontier and the wilderness outside. Sophisticated technology and the vast scale of agriculture have increased the contrast, so that land is seen as either thoroughly controlled by, or else untouched by, human beings. In other words, either Connie or (a rather corrupted) Aggie are fully in control. The symbol of this attitude to conservation is the tropical rain-forest; the symptom of this attitude to farming is a monotonous sea of weed-free corn. Contrast the English hedgerow, the consequence of centuries of interplay between agricultural planning and spontaneous growth. There need be no exclusive choice between conservation and farming; indeed, it is crucial for the health of both that Connie and Aggie sit down together and talk.

Practical Conclusions

Let me end by summarising the conclusions which Libbie, Connie and Aggie together contribute to the moral debate about animals.

1) As human beings we are:
   (i) part of the ecological system. Therefore we need to make use of other creatures;
   (ii) unique in having moral responsibility. Therefore we need to attend carefully to the moral implications of our impact on other creatures.
2) We have a moral responsibility:
   (i) where possible to avoid mistreating individual animals through the frustration of basic elements of their way of life. (It is always wrong to inflict unnecessary suffering on animals.)
   (ii) where possible to avoid damaging ecological systems of which other animals are a part and upon which they depend. (It is

always wrong to risk unbalancing such systems without serious reason.)

(iii) in various particular ways to those animals which have become domesticated, whose well-being is mutually and closely interdependent with ours. Similarly, we have a particular responsibility for the ecological health of the land which we farm or garden.

3) From 2(i) it follows that it will normally be inappropriate to keep in captivity any animals whose basic instincts will thereby be frustrated. All animals which are domesticated, moreover, must be appropriately housed and nurtured.

4) From 2 (ii) it follows that it is necessary to protect some areas of land fully from the impact of industrialised human agriculture (though not necessarily from all pre-industrial human activity).
It is also appropriate to protect other areas from urbanisation.

5) From 1(i) and (ii) it follows that we cannot make a simple ethical contrast between, on the one hand, abstinence and conservation and, on the other, use. Rather we must develop more nuanced ways of distinguishing between the ethical and unethical use of animals and land.

6) Ethical methods of farming will be characterised by an ideal of care and understanding underpinned by familiarity with and attentiveness to animals and land; it will not be dominated by the motive of profit. Consequently, in the short term it is likely to yield less and more expensive (although better quality) produce.

7) From 4) and 6) it follows that the societies which determine the use of land, and which buy the farmers' produce, will need to develop an ethics of self-restraint, which respects the moral limits set by the needs of animals (wild and domesticated) and the land. In the final analysis, the articulation of an ethics for Aggie will require the development (or rediscovery) of elements of a wider social ethics.[15]

It is, of course, simpler to listen only to any one of Libbie, Connie and Aggie. An integrated and comprehensive ethical view, however, requires that we take into account all three of them. In specific situations, therefore, there will be no automatic way of reading off a practical decision, as if the needs of conservation must always override those of farming, or vice versa. In any concrete instance our first job will be simply to observe the situation attentively and notice all the moral considerations involved. After careful attention, and then careful reflection, we will then come to a judgement, by exercising the unfashionable, but fundamental, virtue of practical wisdom. The ethics of animals can never be reduced to unreflective rule-following, because it involves so many possibilities that are neither absolutely forbidden nor absolutely demanded. There is, however, nothing particularly problematic about this. Most ethical decisions require balancing possibilities through the use of prudential judgement: how else, for example, do you decide when to visit your aged aunt? One of the benefits of a sane ethics of animals might be to restore the Aristotelian virtue of *prudentia* to its properly central place.

Remembering Aggie

Next time you sit in an aeroplane and gaze out of the window at some stretch of European countryside, remember Aggie. For the unplanted cities, where most of us dwell, and the untilled mountains and marshes, where some of us holiday, will appear as tiny smudges on the vast, orderly map for which she is responsible. No practical philosophy of animals can afford to ignore the distinctive role of the farmer. Many of us, in practice, play lip-service to the views of an idealised conflation of Libbie and Connie, while simultaneously both ignoring, and living off, a corrupted Aggie. If we are to persuade Aggie to reform herself we need to attend seriously to her uncorrupted purposes; especially, we must not tacitly assume that those purposes are essentially corrupt. We cannot begin to discuss the love of animals with honesty and clarity until we first acknowledge what a complex business it is. Libbie, Connie and Aggie all have their part to play; and each of them deserves a fair hearing.[16]

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1 The main arguments can be found in Peter Singer *Animal Liberation* (1975, second edition, Thorsons 1991), T.Regan *The Case for Animal Rights* (University of California Press 1983) and S.R.L.Clark *The Moral Status of Animals* (OUP 1984). Theological discussion has been pioneered by Andrew Linzey, e.g. in *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (SPCK 1987); see also A.Linzey and D.Yamomoto *Animals on the Agenda* (SCM 1998). Anyone who is unconvinced that we do in fact have moral duties to animals should read Mary Midgley's excellent *Animals and Why They Matter* (University of Georgia 1983).

2 The fox-hunting debate provides an ironic example of this. It is not clear that fox-hunting does in fact increase the overall amount of animal suffering. It is clear, however, that its opponents find particularly distasteful the apparent cruelty of the hunters. In other words, a primary motivation for opposing fox-hunting is that cruelty in human beings is a bad thing, irrespective of its consequences for animals. This is the precise ground upon which Aquinas opposes cruelty to animals, something for which he has been roundly condemned by animal-loving philosophers.

3 See Robert Elliot and Arran Gare *Environmental Philosophy* (Open University Press 1983), Robin Attfield *The Ethics of Environmental Concern* (Blackwell 1983), Holmes Rolston III *Environmental Ethics* (Temple University Press 1988), Susan J.Armstrong and Richard G.Botzler *Environmental Ethics* (McGraw-Hill Inc. 1993).

4 See Mary Anne Warren 'The Rights of the Nonhuman World' in Elliot and Gare. My overall argument builds on Warren's integration of environmentalism and animal rights.

5 Fortunately, however, science is ahead of philosophy here; increased biological understanding of animal welfare (see e.g. Marian Dawkins, 'The scientific basis for assessing suffering in animals' in Peter Singer (ed.) *In Defence of Animals* (Blackwell 1985)) has contributed to legislation; while limited cooperation is developing between farmers and conservation bodies. Improved theory can only encourage such collaboration.

6 *Nichomachean Ethics* VIII, 1156a. 22 ff.

7 I simply note here a serious problem. It is arguable that there is no unchanging nature of a specific type of animal. More seriously still, stock-breeding aims to change an animal precisely in order to make it more useful to human beings. A pig may be bred with so little intelligence and initiative, and so much fat, that it seems to have become little more than raw material for our ends. The concept of an animal's nature is a difficult one, but I suspect that we need to hang on to it if there are to be any ethical limits to the treatment of animals. Indeed, we need to be able to identify both a flourishing specimen even of a highly-bred animal, and the point at which selective breeding for utilitarian purposes so distorts the animal's nature as to constitute cruelty.

8 My account brings out the ways in which a farmer's relationship with his animals is mutually beneficial. Compare Stephen Budiansky's *The Covenant of the Wild* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1992), which argues suggestively that we did not (and indeed would not have been able to) domesticate wild animals intentionally. Rather, human beings and certain animals co-evolved in an essentially co-operative relationship.

9 Pp. 175 ff.

10 Vicki Hearne offers a memorable philosophical reflection on horse- and dog-training in *Adam's Task* (Heinemann 1986), see especially pp. 84ff.

11 'At times': perhaps the traditional integration of certain times of slaughter into the liturgical calendar acknowledged both the seriousness of this 'tragic element' and the fact that our license to kill without guilt is a gift not to be received lightly or immoderately.

12 Strict vegetarians will argue that the farmer is always wrong to raise animals for meat. Their own arguments, however, may lead them to recognise that there are better and worse ways of raising animals, and that some meat-farmers share some, though not all, of their ethical concerns.

13 *Artist and Tradesman* (Paulinus Press, 1984).

14 Richard Grove's fascinating book *Green Imperialism* (Cambridge U.P. 1995) tells the story.

15 I have sketched elements of such an ethics in *Flawed Beauty and Wise Use: Conservation and the Christian Tradition* (Blackfriars Publications 1995) and 'Can we ever be satisfied', *Priests and People*, February 1998.

16 I am greatly indebted to comments from Fr David Albert Jones O.P., in particular for my discussion of Aggie.