

- 29 *Lectures*, p. 101. He specifically attacks Romaine again on p. 290.  
30 William Romaine, *The Life, Talk and Triumph of Faith*, Cambridge and London, 1970, p. 197.  
31 *Lectures*, p. 121.  
32 *Autobiographical Writings*, p. 77.

## Whales (again): A Reply to Paul Waldau

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In 1992 this journal published an article entitled “Do Whales have Souls?”. Despite the somewhat whimsical title and the light style the author’s aim was serious. I had hoped to show that it was possible with traditional categories to engage with some contemporary concerns about animals and ecology. Paul Waldau (*New Blackfriars* Sept. ’95) has done me the courtesy of taking this article seriously and has subjected it to a sustained critique. He considers that the traditional theological categories used “risk reinforcing the exclusivist or humanocentric notions which have previously been used to justify a wholesale dismissal of other animals”. In particular he considers the use of “soul”, “rational” and “the implicit use of the category of ‘species’” to undermine the good intentions of the article.

However his criticisms are often at cross purposes with the initial article. A rereading of the original would show that often I was making the same points Waldau wishes to make against me. The modern use of “soul” is usually confined to human beings. “The difference between human beings and animals is sometimes expressed by saying that only human beings have souls”. If one accepts this usage then by asking “Do whales have souls?” I would be asking if whales were really human. “By using the traditional category ‘soul’, Jones is asking if whales have an essence which is like the essence of humans”. Yet I rejected the modern usage and argued that the traditional category of “soul” was not radically humanocentric in the way that Waldau fears. Rather in its biblical and scholastic usage the soul was thought of primarily as the principle of life. Therefore every living thing would have its own sort of soul and “soul” could be used to stress the variety and communality of

living things. By saying that whales have (whale-) souls I was not claiming that whales were human-like. Rather I was reminding the reader that human beings are whale-like and cat-like and plant-like in this respect — that we are one of the many varieties of living things in a habitat of living things.

The use made of the term “soul” in the article (the traditional use) served to shift the emphasis away from the human and the rational. Waldau complains “Human soulfulness and rationality are quite possibly not exhaustive of why whales and other animals might be important or the subject of provocative questions”. I agree with him and indeed made the same point in my article. “Partly people want whalesong to be rational because they cannot value animal life in itself.... The naturalist or environmentalist is like the ancient Psalmist who can see the wild beasts as valuable in themselves, as creatures worshipping God by being themselves”.

For the most part the differences between Waldau and myself seem only to be about tactics. He wishes to reject certain unhelpful modern categories. I wish to subvert these same categories by appeal to broader and more traditional (but lately neglected) categories.

There is however a substantial point in the second half of Waldau’s article on which I must beg to differ. Here he is not picking up any part of the original article but is developing his own views concerning animal species. He rejects the notion that an animal’s species may be relevant as such. He bids us consider “a situation arises in which the major interests (such as continued life and freedom from suffering) of an individual from Species 1 are in conflict with those of an individual from Species 2”. He invites “comparison of these two individuals for purposes of resolving the conflict over whose interests should prevail”. Superficially this has the appearance of fairness and universalizability. Yet in reality the question only has force if Species 1 or Species 2 (or a policeman from Species 3) is a human being or some similarly rational animal. What if the animals in conflict are a stoat and a rabbit, or a grey squirrel and a red squirrel? The conflict is not resolved by appeals to rights but by natural competition. It is only human beings or a similarly rational species who are going to consider what *should* occur. Thus it is not unfair or arbitrary for the decision made to be rooted in the values of the *human* community.

The way in which Waldau describes the situation, abstracting from who or what is making the judgement, is ironically a false sort of *Angelism*. We are asked to consider interests and situations without reference to any particular agent, actor or character. We are not in some relation to someone (as mother, son, doctor, lawyer, friend, wife). We

do not consider the effect on the acting person of their own action or inaction. All that is presented is a calculus of "interest" and "traits which we value".

Waldau asserts that rationality cannot be attributed to human beings as such. "If we say the humans are creatures with intelligence and rationality, what do we do with the many humans who are not intelligent or rational? We risk talking nonsense if we claim that an individual who is admittedly a member of the biological class 'human' does not possess the 'essence' of being human". Yet what he finds obscure many people have no difficulty in understanding. A human individual as such will have a rational nature though he will not always be able to express it. Through immaturity or handicap or injury someone may not have the free use of his reason, but it still makes sense as a possibility for him (as what could have been, what might have been or will be). Human beings are the sort of creatures that have reason even if in some cases they have not developed it. A handicapped child is utterly different from an animal of a sort that never could have a share in human reason. If someone through injury loses the use of his reason he has suffered a great loss, he is a tragic figure. A simple animal is not tragic, has suffered no loss, is just what it is. An injured man does not cease to be a part of the human community. He demands more care of us not less (if we are to show common sensitivity or Christian charity). It would be grotesque and inhuman for us to treat handicapped human beings as so much disposable expense (which we would if we really did act according to "traits which we value"). Waldau questions the morality of experimenting on a chimpanzee to produce a drug to extend the life of an unconscious patient. This is clearly a contrived example. No drug has such a limited application. Also other forms of drug testing, or testing on simpler animals may achieve as much as even the most "worthy" experimenting on chimpanzees. It is a question of what techniques we choose to research and develop.

Moral judgements are not a view from nowhere but are attempts to be better human beings. We aim to achieve our true human good as a part of a human community (a community of friendship). This is not to say that other animals have no place, no weight, no value for us, only that their place will not be on the same footing as that of a fellow human being.

Waldau criticizes the "emphasis on human uniqueness" of much traditional thinking. He wishes to resist "the categories which we have used to separate ourselves from the rest of creation". I am in wholehearted agreement. In fact I think that in his reply Waldau has not freed himself enough from this preoccupation. He wishes to dislodge

human predominance, not to enshrine it, but he still focuses on the issue of human status versus the status of other animals. Yet it is just such a focus which leads people to see a higher status for animals as a threat to human interests. "Animal worship always leads to human sacrifice" (G.K. Chesterton). The habit of juxtaposing (however radically) human status to the status of other animals is a part of the problem not an element of a solution. Radical theses about the moral equality of all species are thus likely to be a further obstacle to the wider acceptance of the moral importance of non-human animals. However, other animals can be important, valuable and worthy of protection even though their status isn't on the same footing as that of human beings. It is possible and I think necessary to say both that human beings are uniquely important for us, and that other non-human animals have a claim on us for protection. If we are animals and with other animals fellow creatures of God and fellow inhabitants of the earth then other animals must have some place in the human good. Our God is, after all, the giver of all life. If, by our negligence, we contribute to the extinction of such marvellous wonders as the great whales then we will have brought about a great evil.

## Reviews

**THE LIBRARY OF DAVID JONES (1895–1974) — A CATALOGUE** by Huw Ceiriog Jones, *The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth* 1995 Pp. 356, £19.

The books, periodicals etc., left by David Jones at his death in 1974, numbering nearly 1800 items, were deposited in the National Library of Wales. Now that they have been listed in this splendid catalogue, students will have much easier access to the richly stocked mind at work, often allusively, in the poems and essays. The date when a book was bought or read can usually be established. Many of his books are annotated, as the catalogue signals, without of course having the space to reproduce or even quote from these notes. For instance, there are 26 copies of *The Anathemata*, in the various editions, half of which have minor corrections in the author's hand. Similarly, there are 29 copies of *In Parenthesis*, most of which have been annotated. But as