

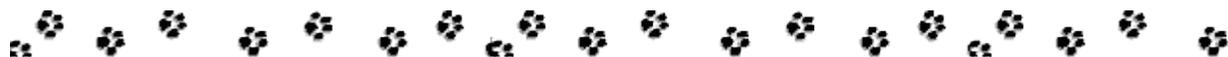
THE MORALITY OF BESTIALITY

This paper was an essay I did for my Philosophy 5 class (5 does NOT stand for fifth year; it was an introductory class), which focused on the morality of sex - homosexuality in particular. Needless to say, it was my favorite. We were free to choose any topic we wished, so long as it had something to do with sexual ethics; with great gusto, I chose to argue for the possibility of moral bestiality (wherein I use the common definition as one who has sex with animals, with no further connotations). Apparently I was the first student who had ever done so.

It also seemed that I was one of the first people to do so, as it was dreadfully difficult finding resources for my paper. I even looked in the Philosopher's Index, and there was only one heading under 'bestiality,' which I was unable to find within UCLA's library. Fortunately there are a few [zoophile sites](#) on the web (to which I make many references), and they were my main resources. I also used *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals* by J.M. Masson and Susan McCarthy.

It is my pride to report that, adjusting for the points I lost for turning the paper in late (and yes, he told me how many those were) I received a 96/100. Not too shabby, especially seeing as how he expressed opposition to the idea of moral bestiality before I wrote this. I must wonder if his opinion has changed.

Although the main body has not been significantly altered since the time of my philosophy class, this essay is a living document; I edit and add to it as I see fit.



Analyzing Bestiality

by Sarah Wheeler

Morality is something one cannot take for granted. We grow up in a culture with certain mass assumptions, certain given taboos, and we accept them. But when one begins to question, when one learns that a certain taboo (such as homosexuality) is in fact a sound practice, it becomes necessary to examine more and more assumptions until you may evaluate a practice on its own grounds, and not the grounds that society has assigned to it.

Bestiality is the practice of having sex with a non-human animal - most commonly, horses and dogs. It is assumed that this practice is animal abuse, that it is an issue of power much like rape or pedophilia, that the humans who engage in it are psychologically unsound. This I have questioned.

Of course, when considering the ethically if any action, one must outline what would qualify or disqualify an act. Bestiality would most certainly be immoral should the animal be raped, and it is entirely possible to rape an animal. But just as it is possible to violate consent, it is also

possible to obtain it. Bestiality may be considered immoral on other grounds, such as setting back the best interests of the participants or by the mere act displaying a psychological deficiency in the human. It would also be immoral should the human merely use the animal for his/her selfish interests, if you will, as a means to an end; however, many bestialists - or zoophiles, as some prefer to call themselves - maintain a deep and caring emotional bond with their non-human partners.

🐾 The animal side: consent and understanding 🐾

The foremost considered issue when considering bestiality is that of consent. Can an animal consent? Popular wisdom says no. Before determining whether they may consent, however, one must consider what consent is and what it means.

Consent, most essentially and basically, is agreeing to participate in an action, or to have an action done upon you, of your own free will. But one must consider more than that; you must have proper knowledge of what the action is, and all information about the proposed situation that may affect your decision. You may consent to have sex with a person, but your decision may have been different had you known that they were married; if s/he did not tell you that, your ability to consent was tampered with. One must also make the decision autonomously, without threats or coercive rewards.

So how much of this really applies to animals? An animal can say yes or no, though they cannot speak human language; it is obvious to even the densest of humans that a dog's snarl or a horse's raised hoof means "Back off." Similarly, animals will ask for sex, though the signals can be less blatant and thus one must pay attention to their behavior to interpret them, especially as we are taught in polite society to ignore them. The issue, however, is simple; if an animal wants sex, it will ask for it or consent to sexual advances; if it does not, it will resist, fight back or at the very least make it clear with reluctant body language. At that point the action becomes immoral should the human continue their actions, for they are obviously forcing sex upon a being who does not want it.

But may animals give fully informed voluntary consent? Do they know everything they need to know? The question of 'fully informed voluntary consent' has always seemed strange to me when considering animals. What does one mean when talking about 'fully informed?' Would your marital status matter to a dog? That the consent is voluntary should be quite obvious - it is nearly impossible to manipulate or cajole an animal into doing something it truly doesn't enjoy. (Just try to convince a 1500-pound clydesdale to accept your advances when it's not interested.) And animals do enjoy sex and sexual stimulation; the numerous cases of dogs humping various human's legs should make that obvious. It is even possible to use sex as a reward, much like a food treat or favorite toy. Most of the considerations humans must take under advisement are a non-issue for animals. Animals know everything they need to know; so far as their sphere of knowledge and consciousness is concerned, as far as it is relevant they are autonomous beings giving voluntary consent. Saying that animals cannot consent because they simply cannot understand what humans would need to understand to consent is an inherently unfair exclusion; if an animal cannot understand something, how could it be relevant to them?

And why on Earth would we expect the same levels of understanding for a different species, who by definition has a different capacity and requirement for understanding the world? To expect the human of the non-human is to expect the unnecessary and the unobtainable.

There is also the concern that a particular animal's loyalty to an owner would make it unwillingly consent to his/her advances. This is patently anthropomorphization; even if an animal is completely devoted to its owner and is utterly gentle and submissive, it will not hide its own reactions. If it does not want to have sex, at the very least it will pull away and act reluctant or uncomfortable, at which point the person (who should be fluent in the species' body language, just as you should speak a common language with your human partner) should stop. If they do not, it has become rape. Rape is rape regardless of species, and rape is immoral.

As it has been stated and as it should be obvious, animals can and do enjoy sex; their libidos are close enough to ours so that many species are known to masturbate or even engage in recreational sex. Also, given the slightest bit of encouragement, animals will of their own free will seek out sexual attention from humans. They will even do so with discouragement - the stereotype of the incorrigible dog humping a human's leg, for instance.

On the flip side, can humans understand what sex means to the animal? It can be very difficult to understand certain behaviors, given the language barrier, not to mention the species barrier. However, it is not impossible. Animal trainers and handlers must understand body language; often their lives depend on it, as is the case with elephants, wild cats, or wolves. As far as sex goes, sex may not always be an expression of love or even of affection (as is true with humans); male-male mounting behavior in many species is an expression of dominance and aggression. However, these differences do not mean that we are unable to understand non-human sex. We must simply observe and study.

However, even with consent, even with understanding, is bestiality against the best interests of either participant? Humans can want things that are essentially bad for us; merely because we consent to or understand something does not mean that going ahead and doing it will be good for us. The same goes for animals; their liking for antifreeze is conclusive proof that they can want things that are bad for them. Indeed, it is possible to invite negative consequences - such as infection or injury - if one is not careful while engaging in bestiality. But mere injury or sickness would not make it *wrong* - that can happen during human sex as well. Foolish or imprudent does not make immoral.

However, if the act of bestiality were wrong simply because of the nature of the act, then it would be a function of the entire domestic animal - human relationship. Animals and humans collaborate on many areas of life; from working animals to lap pets, we live in close quarters, we share resources, we become deeply emotionally attached to each other. We consider them family; there are pet hospitals and pet cemeteries. People mourn their pet's death and take joy in shared activities. The relationship between humans and domestic animals is extremely close; with all that emotional intensity, sex can rightly be considered an extension of that relationship. Whether this relationship itself is wrong is a huge argument that will not be considered here; suffice it to say that I do not consider every pet owner and farmer to be immoral simply because

they have close relationships with animals. Nor are bestialists immoral simply for extending that relationship into the sexual realm. An action cannot be wrong simply because it is sexual; there must be other basis.

🐾 The human side: psychology and religion 🐾

The psychology of the human wishing to engage in bestiality is the next topic under scrutiny. I do not consider perversion to be a relevant judgment; like unnaturalness, it is often used to describe something which is merely aesthetically repulsive to the individual. If something is indeed 'perverted' and morally wrong to boot, then it will be wrong on other basis, not simply because it is perverse.

A common conception (that is not always a misconception) is that the humans who engage in bestiality could only be interested in the animal as a sex toy; in other words, no one who really cared about animals would have sex with them. Stated in those terms, it seems very odd. Is not sex a tantamount means of expressing caring, love, and affection, especially considering that sex is as enjoyable to animals as it is to us? That aside, some humans obviously do practice bestiality not because they love the animals, but because the animal is a non-speaking yet living object that they can treat as a sex toy. And of course there is always the lonely Shepard or curious farm boy, where the animals they accompany are the only outlet for sexual energy. But these are not the only participants in bestiality. Bestialists - perhaps in this context more accurately labeled zoophiles - are often people who not only claim to deeply love and care about their animals, but whose behavior supports this claim. They are experts in animal behavior, knowing exactly what signs to look for to be able to tell when the animal is annoyed or uncomfortable with their advances (and vice versa); they take good care of their animal partners, and are conscientious pet owners; many are fierce animal-rights advocates and detest animal cruelty in all it's forms. With all this, it would be ignoring the evidence to then say that they are objectifying the animals as toys or even rationalizing their practice in the face of contrary evidence, as practicing pedophiles do. As much as any chaste animal owner, they deeply care for the emotional and physical wellbeing of their companions.

A common approach is that by having sex with an animal, the human is degrading him (or her) self. This viewpoint is often derived from the notion that humans are eminently superior to animals; often this has a religious basis. Religiously, animals have been regarded as under Man's rule, for us to use and even destroy as we please (though this has considerably softened in contemporary environmental-conscious times); though sex could be considered just another use, it would be absolutely taboo for a human to actually relate to an animal on it's own grounds. Especially as sex is regarded as existing solely for procreation, and perhaps for the expression of love, sex with an animal is absolutely forbidden. The concept that one might love or relate to an animal is highly threatening to the Church's anthropocentric world-view. This argument, like most arguments with religious basis, is compounded with problems, the foremost being that homocentrism is little more than a Western excuse for human dominance and rationalizing atrocities such as the meat industry and animal abuse and neglect. That being the case, I will address the non-religious issue: that bestiality is degrading relative to what humans should be and should do in their relationships and sexual activity. This argument is not without

appeal; for surely, a partner with whom you can relate to on the same intellectual level, and with whom you can share activities of human nature is to be sought. Of course, this point has merit. However, it is also not to be denied that deep emotional bonds with animals are possible, and they do share aspects of our lives in a different fashion. True, one cannot discuss philosophy with them, but even the chaste pet owner can relate to them on a deep emotional and physical level. Zoophiles extend that to the sexual realm. It may, perhaps, be considered immoral for a zoophile to substitute human relationships for animal ones; however, not all zoophiles are animal-exclusive, and even if that situation would be considered immoral, it would not make the practice of bestiality itself immoral.

Many argue that sex should only occur in relationships where you can relate to the person on a human level; but sex can be an expression of many things, not merely a completely egalitarian relationship. It is the embodiment of the flesh; it can express so many things, from pure physicality to romantic love to mutual friendship. Though a relationship where a meeting of minds does occur may be ideal, that does not condemn anything less as being immoral. This would devalue the relationships of those humans who simply do not choose to (or who are even not interested in) intellectual issues, negating the tremendous value of their emotional, physical, and (if you will) spiritual connection. It would indeed be asking too much to ask all persons to seek the ideal or nothing. Moreover, people who engage in bestiality for more than pure physical pleasure profess that they truly feel a sexual and emotional attraction to animals parallel to or even beyond that which they feel for humans. If one can indeed relate to another being across the species barrier so intimately, as reading accounts of zoophiles has convinced me, then that relationship does not fall so very short of the ideal after all. It is a huge step for the typical anthropocentric mind to accept, that a human could relate on such grounds to an animal; however, after reading the writings of zoophiles with an open mind, one must accept that it is so. This is further supported by the fact that many zoophiles simply take pleasure in masturbating the animal to orgasm, and not merely using it as a tool towards their own gratification. They derive pleasure from giving the animal pleasure; it would be hard to find a truer point towards the proof of love. There is as much sincerity and feeling in their accounts as there is for accounts of human love, and if one is to believe in love at all and treat the evidence fairly, human-animal love is undeniable.

What about animal-human love though? Can animals reciprocate the feelings? Love is a terribly difficult emotion to prove, especially in the absence of language. However, animals are affectionate and loyal; and as much as is possible through the species barrier, they display all evidence of being capable of love. There is always the problem of communications, and of course of what sex means to the animal; however, given intimacy and close observation, no person who lives or works with animals can deny with a clean conscience that animals do not love. The evidence, though much of it is anecdotal and personal, is there.

Is the human-animal attraction a sickness? A pathology to be cured? As of today bestiality is still on the crazy person's list of paraphilias or mental disorders, much like homosexuality was a few decades ago. In the case of homosexuality, crazy persons were simply unaware of the committed and happy relationships that were possible within homosexuality. Out of plain and simple ignorance, they condemned an entire sexual orientation as a mental sickness. I

would make a similar analogy to bestiality - crazy persons are simply unaware of the relationships that are possible with animals. Of course not all of those practicing bestiality even consider connecting with an animal so deeply; remember the lonely shepherd. However, there is a considerable community of individuals who find themselves much happier when loving and consummating animal relationships than when restricting themselves to humans; and, barring a concrete wrong (such as animal abuse), I for one will not condemn that happiness. To all appearances, it is fulfilling and complete; it is not indicative of any psychological shortcoming; and when abstaining from internally accepting or practicing bestiality, many zoophiles experience the same symptoms that homosexuals do while still in the closet - most notably extreme loneliness, isolation, and depression. Bestiality cannot be cured, and at least one crazy person has expressed the view that there is no need to change it. From [Actaeon's page](#):

"The psychiatric community knows of no 'cure' for zoophilia, any more than there is a 'cure' for homosexuality or bisexuality, and would generally regard an attempt to change a person's lifestyle as being more harmful and disruptive than the lifestyle itself may be. It is possible to sway a person away from an undesired lifestyle by using drugs such as Depoprovera (sp?), but this acts by suppressing _all_ sexual desire, and makes a person _asexual_. Take away the drug, and the person eventually reverts to his natural state. The same is true of aversion therapy, whether through shock therapy or some other negative association such as a noxious odor."

Thus, zoophilia is not a sickness, not a perversion, and not in and of itself a tangible detriment to happiness. It is indeed deeply and internally rooted in the psyche and it is nothing short of cruel to deny a zoophile the legitimacy of their feelings.

🐾 Comparisons to Pedophilia 🐾

Western anthropocentric culture often takes the view that animals are like children. In some ways the comparison is legitimate; animals do not have the same mental capacities as adult humans, and they most certainly have a social status comparable to children. However, to extend the analogy so far to say that bestiality is wrong because pedophilia is wrong would be to err. In a few ways, animals are somewhat like human children. But in many more relevant ways, they are not; when it comes down to it, animals are simply not children. Children may be verbally manipulated into submitting to something they do not want; and even if they are curious and do want sex with an adult, it would probably not be in their best interests. The actions would be inappropriate socially, which would subject them to guilt and shame before they had the mental capacity or defenses to understand this social condemnation or separate themselves from it. True, the zoophile may be subjected to guilt and shame, but that is an undertaking of his/her own choice; it was not put upon him/her by a more knowledgeable person who knew what they would go through. Zoophiles make the choice to practice bestiality with full knowledge of the social consequences; children would not yet know what they were getting into when they solicited or accepted sex from an adult, and adult who DOES know what the child will be forced to endure in the upcoming years.

Moreover, the children would not be ready for sex emotionally or physically (especially with a partner who is so much more physically, mentally, and socially powerful than they) and the

sex would interfere with their natural and healthy development. Though children often engage in exploratory sex play on their own, at least it is with someone on their own level of experience and power; the disparity of power and relevant knowledge between an adult and a child is insurmountable, on somewhat the same grounds as employer-employee relationships, though due to the difference between the mental state between an adult and a child, much more exaggerated. The reader may notice that I do not consider the disparity in knowledge between humans and animals to be of similar importance; this is because not only are adult animals emotionally ready for sex, but to put it bluntly, the difference in knowledge between the human and the animal is irrelevant. Does the fact that bestiality is taboo in human society matter to the animal? Perhaps it might if the penalty was confiscation or destruction of the animal, but the fact that the animal did not *know* would not make a difference, whereas it would matter very much to the child that pedophilia is taboo. The animal also does not have to live in a human world; what we know is for the large part irrelevant to their lives, whereas children must someday live in the same world as the adult, with the same standards and expectations. Children will do what an adult tells them because they've been taught it's simply The Right Thing to do; animals will do it because it's fun or because there's a reward or because they will be punished if they do not or even because they love and want to please us, but not because they should. If it is not worth the reward, if we cause them pain, they will not cooperate simply because they have been told they should.

Consider this list of why sex with human children is not comparable to grown animals, compiled by a zoophile (my reference for which has been removed from its site):

a) [children] will almost certainly be damaged psychologically. Animals are not subject to the social pressures that can lead to a lot of the problems a child may suffer after engaging in sex acts with an adult.

b) ...they are not biologically ready for sex... which can lead to physical injury. No zoophile would ever knowingly do anything sexual with an animal that could physically hurt it.

c) ...they don't understand what's going on because they haven't yet developed a sexual maturity. A child can't comprehend the desire to mate... it's a desire that he or she does not have. An adult animal (and most zoosexuals don't condone sex with sexually immature animals) certainly has a sex drive.. often a very strong one.

d) ...children tend to be very easily coerced by adults. Reluctant animals can be pressured and even trained to tolerate sexual acts and therein lies a gray area but in the end, if a horse or dog absolutely refuses to put up with sex, they can and will resist in a way dangerous to a human.

e) ...children can be physically overpowered by an adult. It would be unwise to try and force a great dane or a horse into anything. The only way a mare is going to accept sexual advances is if she is biologically ready and accepts her partner as one of her herd, accepts them personally. Try anything with a mare that doesn't meet both criteria and you will have 1200 pounds of fury in your face...

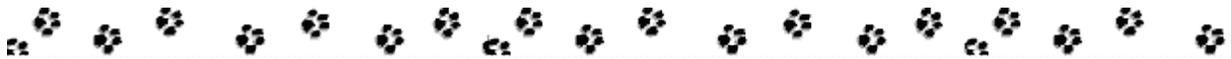
d) When it comes right down to it animals are simply NOT children. We don't eat children or breed children for appearance and conformation to breed. We don't hunt children, don't do medical experiments on them, don't sterilize children early on so they can't breed. (Although Adolf Hitler did try to do most of these things.)

One striking difference between zoophiles and pedophiles is that although some pedophiles seem to have the same deep feelings for children as zoophiles have for animals, many pedophiles (often referred to as the community of boylovers) recognize that sex with children is harmful, especially in this society. I have seen no such mass recognition in the zoophile community; this is not because zoophiles are somehow more rationalizing, or more blind to evidence, but because animals are just not harmed by sex in the same way that children are. There is no legitimate basis for the analogical argument between pedophilia and bestiality.

One opponent sarcastically stated to me, "hands off the puppies I guess." To which my reply was "Of course." Immature animals are harmed by sex before they are developmentally prepared for it just like immature humans, and zoophiles recognize this. Their recognition that immature animals are indeed harmed by sex is further proof that they are not a community that simply rationalizes anything they want; they are indeed concerned for the wellbeing of the animals, and if there is evidence of harm, they will stop as any moral person should.

Conclusion

After open-minded consideration of the facts and arguments, any rational person should recognize that bestiality as a practice is not intrinsically immoral. It may be made immoral by other actions, such as causing the animal pain, using it for your own selfish gratification, or interfering with a young animal's development. However, most zoophiles care for and insure the wellbeing of the animal in such a way that I can consider it nothing less than love. Love, across even the species barrier, is not wrong; and there is indeed no good argument for preventing the consummation of that love.



I have pretty much resigned myself to the self-classification of a platonic zoophile. My emotional connection to animals seems to be, through comparison with that of others, much deeper than that of the average human. It will, in all likelihood, never turn sexual, as the animals appropriate for my lifestyle are not the sort that make such a thing feasible. But, I have found sexual contact to be superfluous to our relationship. Additionally, since I am eminently concerned with animal welfare, I believe in neutering/spaying for their own health, and for the wellbeing of any babies they might bring into the world - when millions are euthanized each year because there aren't enough homes, how could I rationalize allowing an animal under my care to reproduce?