

# Anthropocentrism + Animal Rights

## *Instructions*

During my absence, you will:

- Read about Aristotle and Aquinas' views on animals.
- Answer 10 questions on GoogleForms using your section's GoogleForms link on Archie.
- Upload your assignment for a grade through GoogleForms and Archie.



# Anthropocentrism + Animal Rights Reading

## - Aristotle + Aquinas' Views on Animals

**ARISTOTLE and Thomas AQUINAS were ANTHROPOCENTRISTS . An anthropocentrist is someone who believes that the only moral members of a community are human. It translates to a man-centered or man-based ethics. Therefore, the only concern for non-human animals is how they can better serve man's needs and wants. Read on to find out more about their views.**

**Aristotle believed animals DO NOT have fundamental rights. He believed animals ONLY exist to serve human purposes. AS NATURE PROVES, human beings are at the top of the food chain because, unlike animals, HUMANS have the ability to REASON. See text taken from the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy below for further explanation.**





## **a. Worldview/Religious Theories**

Some philosophers deny that animals warrant direct moral concern due to religious or philosophical theories of the nature of the world and the proper place of its inhabitants. One of the earliest and clearest expressions of this kind of view comes to us from Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.). According to Aristotle, there is a natural hierarchy of living beings. The different levels are determined by the abilities present in the beings due to their natures. While plants, animals, and human beings are all capable of taking in nutrition and growing, only animals and human beings are capable of conscious experience. This means that plants, being inferior to animals and human beings, have the function of serving the needs of animals and human beings. Likewise, human beings are superior to animals because human beings have the capacity for using reason to guide their conduct, while animals lack this ability and must instead rely on instinct. It follows, therefore, that the function of animals is to serve the needs of human beings. This, according to Aristotle, is "natural and expedient" (Regan and Singer, 1989: 4-5)."

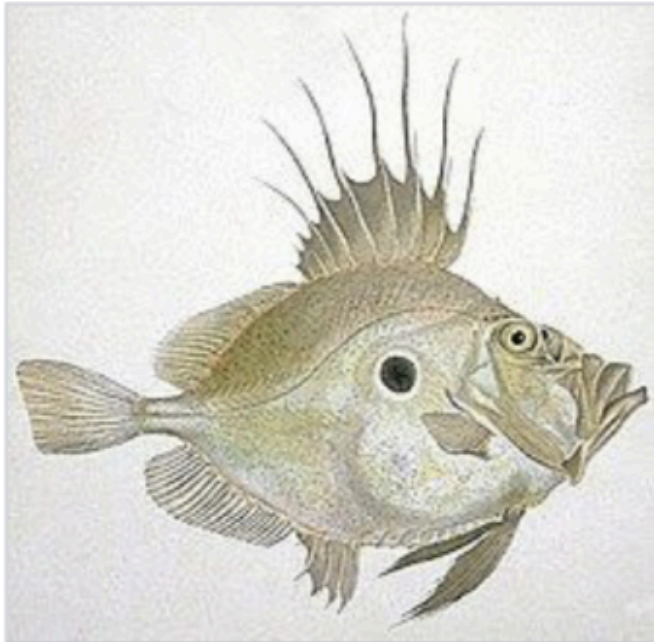
Aristotle greatly contributed to the view that humans are ranked better than all other animals. In Aristotle's History of Animals, he set the stage for a further interest in biology and zoology for

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many scientists to come. *He also influenced many future philosophers to further develop the view that animals are just tools/objects for humans to use and enjoy. See upcoming Thomas Aquinas section.*

# Aristotle's History of Animals (Wikipedia Info)

## “Classification<sup>[edit]</sup>



The *khalkeus* ([John Dory](#)) was one of the many fish named by Aristotle.

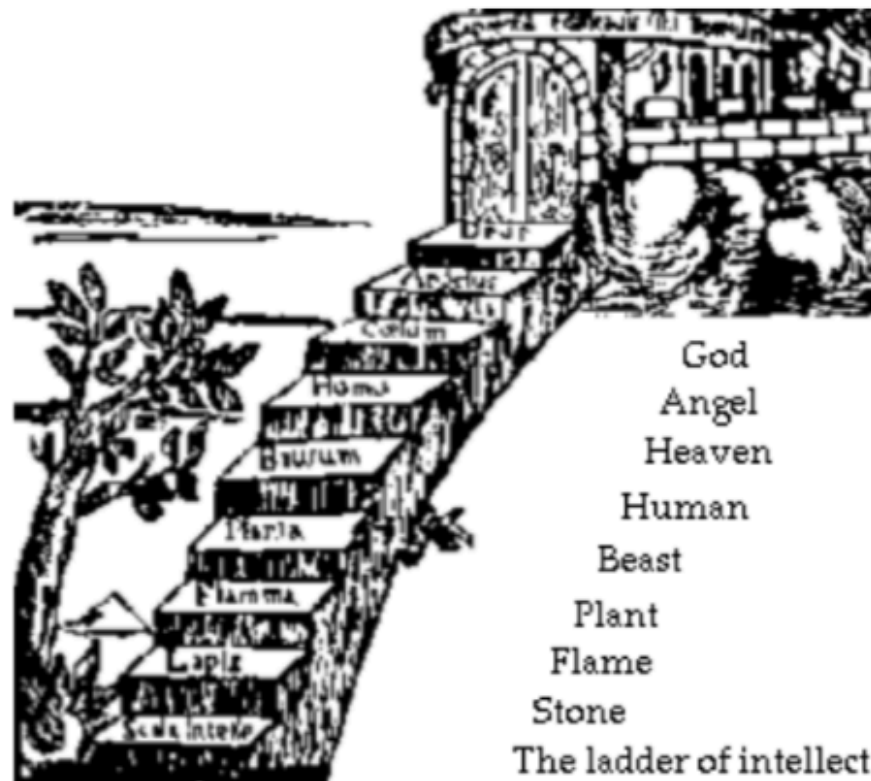
Aristotle distinguished about 500 species of birds, mammals and fishes in *History of Animals* and *Parts of Animals*.<sup>[40][41]</sup> His system of classification, one of the earliest in scientific **taxonomy**, was influential for over two thousand years. Aristotle distinguished animals with blood, Enhaima (the modern zoologist's **vertebrates**) and animals without blood, Anhaima (**invertebrates**).<sup>[m][42][43]</sup>

**Aristotle stated in the *History of Animals* that all beings were arranged in a fixed scale of perfection, reflected in their form (*eidos*).<sup>[9]</sup> They stretched from minerals to plants and animals, and on up to man, forming the [scala naturae](#) or great chain of being.<sup>[46][47]</sup> *His system had eleven grades, arranged according to the potentiality of each being, expressed in their form at birth.* The highest animals gave birth to warm and wet creatures alive, the lowest bore theirs cold, dry, and in thick eggs.<sup>[33]</sup> The system was based on Aristotle's interpretation of the [four elements](#) in his [On Generation and Corruption](#): [Fire](#) (hot and dry); [Air](#) (hot and wet); [Water](#) (cold and wet); and [Earth](#) (cold and dry). These are arranged from the most energetic to the least, so the warm, wet young raised in a [womb](#) with a [placenta](#) were higher on the scale than the cold, dry, nearly mineral eggs of birds.<sup>[48][9]</sup> However, Aristotle is careful never to insist that a group fits perfectly in the scale; he knows animals have many combinations of attributes, and that placements are approximate.<sup>[49]</sup>"**

Wikipedia Citation: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle%27s\\_biology#Classification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle%27s_biology#Classification)



**Thomas Aquinas furthered Aristotle's ideas of a Great Chain of Being by combining his view with Christianity. He believed humans are below the divine and animals are way below humans. Why? He believed only humans can reason that there is a God (animals cannot). Therefore, animals are not worthy of moral consideration- only humans.**



**See text taken from the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy below for further explanation.**

“Following Aristotle, the Christian philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) argues that since only beings that are rational are capable of determining their actions, they are the only beings towards which we should extend concern “for their own sakes” (Regan and Singer, 1989: 6-12). Aquinas believes that if a being cannot direct its own actions then others must do so; these sorts of beings are merely instruments. Instruments exist

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for the sake of people that use them, not for their own sake. Since animals cannot direct their own actions, they are merely instruments and exist for the sake of the human beings that direct their actions. Aquinas believes that his view follows from the fact that God is the last end of the universe, and that it is only by using the human intellect that one can gain knowledge and understanding of God. Since only human beings are capable of achieving this final end, all other beings exist for the sake of human beings and their achievement of this final end of the universe.

Remnants of these sorts of views remain in justifications for discounting the interests of animals on the basis of the food chain. On this line of thought, if one kind of being regularly eats another kind of being, then the first is said to be higher on the food chain. If one being is higher than another on the food chain, then it is natural for that being to use the other in the furtherance of its interests. Since this sort of behavior is natural, it does not require any further moral justification.”

Link to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy Animals and Ethics Page:  
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/anim-eth/>

## **Aristotle and Aquinas Views on Animals Assessment**

**(1) Which of the following letter choices best summarizes Aquinas' views on animals?**

- (A) God made man in his image. Only man can rationalize that there is a God. Animals cannot rationalize that there is a God and were therefore created to serve man. Humans are towards the top of the Great Chain of Being and animals are below them. It is only natural for humans to make use of animals that are lower on the food chain and Great Chain of Being.
- (B) Only man can understand that there is a Great Chain of Being, but, as stewards (representatives) of animals, we have a moral obligation to protect animals.
- (C) Only man can understand that we are towards the top of the Great Chain of Being and that animals are below us. Man can use animals to serve man's purposes so long as the animals do not suffer in the process.
- (D) The only difference between man and animals are varying degrees of intelligence. Some animals are more intelligent than a new-born baby but they do not have rights because a new-born baby will eventually grow to outsmart the animal. If an animal is not as intelligent as an adult human being without mental incapacities, then it can be used for whatever purpose man wants it to fill.



**(2) Which statement best describes the impact of Aristotle and Aquinas' thought on Americans today?**

- (A) The majority of Americans today do not think about the way meat is packaged for consumption and justify their eating of meat based upon the idea that humans are at the top of the food chain for a good reason. (Approximately 90% of Americans eat meat on a weekly basis<sup>1</sup>)
- (B) Many Americans use animals to serve their own purposes without much thought whether it be a fashionable leather purse, to entertain at circuses, for cheap make-up products, etc. based upon the idea that humans are at the top of the food chain for a good reason
- (C) Both A & B
- (D) B only

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<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/02/26/465431695/eat-less-meat-were-told-but-americans-habits-are-slow-to-change>

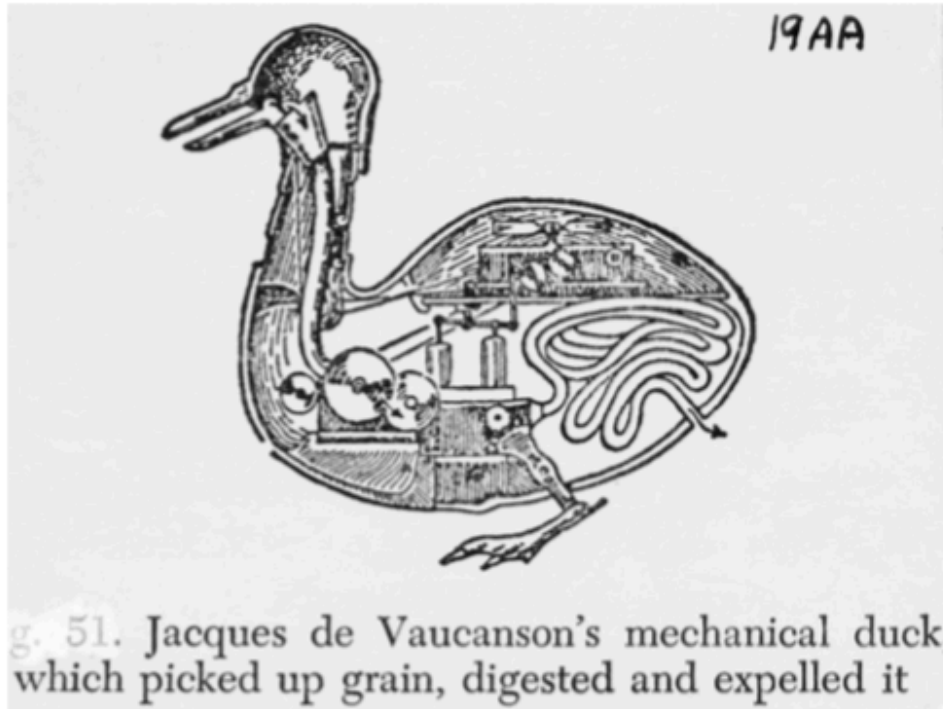
**(3) Part A: Which statement best describes Aristotle's influence on Thomas Aquinas?**

- (A) Aristotle came up with a classification system for animals that showed some animals are naturally superior to other animals.
- (B) Aristotle came up with the idea that only humans can reason that there is a God.
- (C) Aristotle's taxonomy influenced Aquinas' Christian viewpoint.
- (D) Aristotle's writing on the subject of aesthetics influenced Aquinas' views on how to creatively use animals for man's purpose such as using the fur of tigers for fashion and home decoration.

**(4) Part B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer from Part A?**

- (A) "It follows, therefore, that the function of animals is to serve the needs of human beings."
- (B) "The highest animals gave birth to warm and wet creatures alive, the lowest bore theirs cold, dry, and in thick eggs.[ 33] The system was based on Aristotle's interpretation of the four elements in his *On Generation and Corruption* : Fire (hot and dry); Air (hot and wet); Water (cold and wet); and Earth (cold and dry)."
- (C) "Since animals cannot direct their own actions, they are merely instruments and exist for the sake of the human beings that direct their actions."
- (D) "Aristotle stated in the *History of Animals* that all beings were arranged in a fixed scale of perfection, reflected in their form (eidos). They stretched from minerals to plants and animals, and on up to man, forming the *scala naturae* or great chain of being."

(5) Both Aristotle and Aquinas would argue that animals are similar to the drawing below so that man may do what man wants with them:



g. 51. Jacques de Vaucanson's mechanical duck, which picked up grain, digested and expelled it

- (A) True
- (B) False

**(6) Which of the following letter choices BEST defines the term anthropocentrism?**

- (A) Non-human animal based ethics; moral consideration is not limited to human beings- it extends to non-human animals
- (B) Man-based ethics; moral consideration is limited to human beings; non-human animals serve the purpose of man
- (C) Non-human animal based ethics; moral consideration is limited to human beings- it does not extend to non-human animals
- (D) Man and non-human animals based ethics; moral consideration extends to all living things

**(7) True or False: Aristotle believed that there is a natural hierarchy of living beings. The different levels are determined by the abilities present in the beings due to their natures.**

- (A) True
- (B) False

**(8) Aristotle is famous for his system of classification of animals (taxonomy). Which of the following letter choices best represents how Aristotle classified animals?**

- (A) By blood and bloodless
- (B) By height and weight
- (C) By reptile, amphibian, and mammal
- (D) By hot climate, wet climate, dry climate, temperate climate

**(9) True or False: Thomas Aquinas was a Christian and based his views on animals largely from his religious teaching.**

- (A) True
- (B) False



**(10) Which of the following arguments BEST represents BOTH Aristotle and Aquinas' views on animals?**

(A) P1: Beings that are rational are capable of determining their actions.

P2: Non-human animals are incapable of determining their actions.

P3: Any being incapable of determining their actions are an instrument.

C: Therefore, non-human animals are instruments for beings (man) to use for their own ends/needs/goals.

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(B) P1: Beings that are rational are capable of determining their actions.

P2: Non-human animals are capable of determining their actions as they are made in God's image.

P3: Any being capable of determining their actions are not an instrument.

C: Therefore, non-human animals are not instruments for beings (man) to use for their own ends/needs/goals.

(C) P1: Beings that are rational are capable of determining their actions.

P2: Non-human animals are incapable of determining their actions.

P3: Any being incapable of determining their actions is not an instrument.

C: Therefore, non-human animals are instruments for beings (man) to use for their own ends/needs/goals.

(D) P1: Beings that are irrational are incapable of determining their actions.

P2: Non-human animals are rational. They only have different qualia.

P3: Any being incapable of determining their actions are an instrument.

C: Therefore, non-human animals are instruments for beings (man) to use for their own ends/needs/goals.

**E.C. +5:**

True or False:

Bentham would agree on Thomas Aquinas' following point, "If one being is higher than another on the food chain, then it is natural for that being to use the other in the furtherance of its interests. Since this sort of behavior is natural, it does not require any further moral justification."

- (A) True
- (B) False