CONCERNING ALL CREATURES: REVERENCE FOR LIFE WITHIN A PROCESS WORLDVIEW AND THE BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SANCTUARY AS AN EXEMPLARY MODEL

by

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(Under the Direction of Carolyn Jones Medine)

ABSTRACT

Examining process theology and reverence for life ethics, I attempt to overcome the dualistic and mechanistic worldview of classical theology in order to demonstrate that Christianity is compatible with animal welfare. Additionally, using the model of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, I demonstrate that reverence for life ethics are achievable.

INDEX WORDS: Process theology, Reverence for life, Worldview, Ethics, Animal welfare, Mechanistic view of nature, Albert Schweitzer, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary

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DEDICATION

The following thesis is dedicated to Dr. Neil George Haycocks, my wonderful husband, whose unconditional love gives me more strength and more courage than I've ever known, and to Dancer, Mouse, Scooter, Rocky, Chico Rodriguez, and all of the other amazing creatures in that beautiful canyon in Kanab. You inspire me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: A SURVEY OF CHRISTIANITY AND ANIMAL WELFARE

For almost two millennia, scholars and theologians have failed to adequately address the issue of animal welfare within the Christian framework. While acknowledged in many other traditions, concern for animals is elusive in Christian scripture and practice. Although some Christian movements and theologies have been introduced to address this issue, none have convinced the Christian community at large of its integral role in the wellbeing of animals. Throughout my research, I have discovered that most approaches seem to lack at least one of the three components I believe necessary to implement revolution: 1) a change from the antiquated classical theology worldview to a communal worldview that includes all of creation; 2) a new code of ethics to accompany the new worldview; 3) a model of action and an exemplar of leadership in respecting animal life. To argue this, in this paper I will demonstrate that the current Western Christian position on animals is not primary to the Christian faith, but is a by-product of doctrines adopted by the church in order to accomplish goals entirely unrelated to animals. I will argue that these positions need to be replaced by newer, universal doctrines based on modern scientific discovery and a universal theology, process theology. I will show that process theology is compatible with the reverence for life ethics of Dr. Albert Schweitzer in that both arrive at a common thread found in all creatures, and both promote value in all life. Additionally, I will demonstrate that when we synthesize the animal-inclusive worldview of process theology with the reverence for life ethics of Albert Schweitzer, justification for the compassion and respect for all animals is realized.

However, it is imperative that we not stop at mere reflection; a model of service and action must be available for the Christian community to observe. Such a paradigm can be found in the Best Friends Animal Society, the nation's largest no-kill animal shelter. Through ingenuity and a reverence for all life, Best Friends has decreased animal euthanasia in the United States from 17 million to 5 million animals per year and has improved the lives of thousands of dogs, cats, farms animals, wildlife, and reptiles. From spay and neuter programs, to blood transfusions and prosthetic limbs, to physical and psychological rehabilitation, the Best Friends organization goes above and beyond the expected call of duty to serve to all animals, no matter what their needs, and to value each one of their lives. Their mission is "To lead a kindness revolution that transforms the way people relate to animals, nature and each other." The result is a living example of service to, and reverence for, animal life that all Christians can duplicate.

The question of human kinship with animals has lingered far too long as philosophers, scholars, theologians and scientists have mulled over the responsibility of human beings to promote the wellbeing of animals. From Pre-Socratic notions of metempsychosis to current-day factory farming, our views of, and uses for, animals have run the full gamut. As our scientific knowledge increases, providing us with evermore evidence that animals *do* feel pain and *are* intelligent, communal creatures, our abuses and disregard for animal life increase. Human beings have moved further away from any notion of kinship with animals and have adopted the belief that animals exist solely for the comforts of human beings. Be it their suffering or their demise, we have learned to turn a blind eye to the plight of animals as long as it is in the name of human benefit. But how did we get here?

In the Western world, many critics believe that Christianity played a major role in the shift in thought by promoting "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen" (White

1205). In addition to anthropocentricism, Christianity adopted the doctrines of dualism and the mechanistic view of nature, which have proven to be even more harmful to animals. These doctrines, however, are not found in Christian scripture and are not fundamental to the Christian faith. Rather, they were founded upon Greek philosophy and seventeenth-century science, and were embraced by the church for political and social reasons--reasons unrelated to the creatures to whom they ultimately cause the most harm. The doctrines of dualism and mechanism could (and should, and can easily) be removed and replaced with an updated theology founded on new scientific and empirical evidence. Without the doctrines of dualism, mechanistic nature, and anthropocentrism, Christianity is, in fact, very compatible with animal welfare. To argue this, in this chapter I will examine the Bible's stance on animal welfare and how that stance is misinterpreted or ignored in Christian theology. I will also examine the role Descartes played in contemporary views of animals and their status. Turning from this mechanistic view of animals, I will propose an alternative: a process theology model. To reach that point, however, we must first examine our Greek philosophical forefathers, travel through Hebrew and Christian Scripture, and rethink the science and worldview of Western Christianity in the seventeenth century.

Empedocles, Homer, Hesiod and Pythagoras all subscribed "to a conception of living things as sharing a common basic nature" (Steiner 52). In his writings, Homer often drew parallels between the strengths of warriors and the courage, tenacity and survival skills of powerful animals such as bulls, lions and even snakes. It was widely held that human beings and animals were of the same origin, differing only in degree, and shared a respect and fondness for each other: "Some of the most insightful and sophisticated discussions of animals are those of Greco-Roman antiquity. The earliest texts bearing on animals exhibit sensitivity to the

fundamental kinship between human beings and animals, and the most influential philosophers in antiquity show a remarkable knowledge of the capacities of animals" (Steiner 37). It was Pythagoras who first "espoused an ethic of kinship with animals based on the doctrine of metempsychosis or transmigration of souls" (Steiner 45). He believed there to be a continuity between human beings and nonhuman beings, and ascertained that there were implications "at least for the purification of the soul if not for the sake of nonhuman beings themselves," in regards to the humane treatment of nonhuman beings (Steiner 49). Pythagoras, who is possibly the first documented vegetarian in the Western world, influenced Empedocles, who understood metempsychosis to mean that, "human souls can enter animal bodies as well as vice versa" (Steiner 51). Plato continues this notion and believed, too, in a human/nonhuman kinship and metempsychosis. With such a firm footing in the Greco-Roman world, it seems difficult to imagine how animals have since transitioned into such devalued beings, appreciated solely for their contributions to human beings, be it in the form of food, clothing or entertainment. The rift between animal and human has become so large that animals are no longer perceived as a part of the same community as human beings, nor are they any longer revered for their skills, intelligence, and power, as they once were. Instead, over the course of Western history, animals have been subjugated and made into products for human benefit and luxury. Animals have been robbed of their kinship, their sentience and their intrinsic value, and they have been reclaimed by human beings as units of production, or "livestock," for which the human goal is to produce more animals, disregarding their health and happiness, to satisfy the human hunger and need for animal-based luxuries.

In the last few centuries, much reflection has been dedicated to the influence of Christianity on nature. Many scholars have concluded with the belief that Christianity, at its

roots, is indifferent to nonhuman welfare and that it calls for human beings to exploit nature for human benefit. On both points I disagree. Christianity is quite considerate of nonhuman welfare as an ethical religion, as demonstrated in its exemplar, Christ. Indeed, what has come out of Christianity that has lent itself to the destruction of nature and animals has not come from scripture or the primary doctrines[1] of the Christian faith, but rather from Christian thinkers such as Augustine and Aquinas, and philosopher Descartes. But for every Augustine, Aquinas and Descartes, there existed a St. Francis of Assisi, a Reverend Arthur Broome and an Albert Schweitzer who promoted animal welfare within the Christian framework. Similarly, there are contradicting views found in biblical scripture. However, ultimately scripture neither overtly sides with the exploitation of animals nor does it overtly put a halt to it. In this chapter, I will examine what biblical scripture says in terms of the humane treatment of animals, as well as

[1] In *Two Great Truths,* David Ray Griffin suggests there are eight primary doctrines of the Christian good news: 1. Our world has been created by a good, loving, wise, purposive God. 2. God, loving all of us, desires that we treat each other with justice and compassion. 3. Our world is essentially good, even though it is full of evil. 4. God continues to act in the world, especially through human beings, to foster good and overcome evil. 5. God's love, concern for justice, and purpose, having already been expressed through a series of prophets and sages, were revealed in a decisive way through Jesus of Nazareth. 6. The divine purpose, thus revealed, is to overcome evil by bringing about a "reign of God" on earth, in which the present subjugation of life to demonic values (lies, ugliness, injustice, hate, and indifference) will be replaced by a mode of life based on divine values (truth, beauty, goodness, justice, compassion). 7. Salvation can be enjoyed here and now, at east in a partial way, through direct experience of, and empowerment by, God as a Holy Spirit, and by the faith that, no matter what, our lives have ultimate meaning, because nothing can separate us from the love of God. 8. The divine purpose is also to bring about an even more complete salvation in a life beyond bodily death. Any doctrines beyond these eight, such as the virgin birth of Jesus or original sin, are secondary and tertiary doctrines, not fundamental to the Christian faith, but were created to support the primary doctrines that are fundamental to the faith. Griffin, David Ray. *Two Great Truths: A New Synthesis of Scientific Naturalism and Christian Faith.* 1st ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. (29-32)

examine the doctrines adopted by Christianity that changed how Western Christianity viewed animals.

It is difficult to read Hebrew scripture without granting that the authors did take into consideration the wellbeing of animals to some extent. However, it is obvious that that animal wellbeing is not a core theme. The scripture is conflicting and the reader is often uncertain of the final ruling on animals. This ambivalence is found most strongly in Genesis 1-9, which is often referenced by those wishing to escape moral duty to animals. Many point specifically to Genesis 1:26-28 in support of the God-granted human dominion of "the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." Additionally, after the flood in 9:2-3, there is written a powerful testament to the God-given permission for human beings to eat "every creature that lives." Admittedly, the granting of earthly rule to man in the creation story and the post-flood consent to eat nonhuman beings is so explicit it is difficult to argue with. However, these verses must be considered in juxtaposition to all the other verses in Genesis 1-9 that argue to the contrary. For example, in Genesis 1:25 God created "wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And *God saw that this was good.*" Before God created human beings, he created animals that he saw as good, in and of themselves (intrinsic value), without reference to human beings and their possible uses of animals. After God created human beings he granted human rule over other creation (Gen1:26) and reiterates human rule in Genesis 1:28. However, immediately following, in verse 1:29, God states to Adam, "See, I give you every seed bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food." Logic follows that if God had intended to grant a carnivorous diet to human beings from the beginning, then verse 1:29 would have been the ideal time to do so. Yet, this is not what happened. Genesis 1:29 does

not follow the dominion of animals that God gave to human beings with permission to consume animals; the two are not equated. Additionally, in Genesis 2:19, God creates animals as *helpers* for man, not slaves of man, nor units of production for man. Perhaps then God's "rule" meant "care for" or "lead," rather than "subjugate" or "dominate" for human dietary fulfillment.

Following God's creation of Adam's helpers, God has Adam give names to all the creatures, thereby creating a bond between human beings and animals. We can only assume that this bond was kept until Genesis 9:2, post-flood, when man is turned against animals. Here, God speaks to Noah and his sons, "Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these." It should be noted that by this time ten generations of human life on earth had passed, so permission to consume animals was not a hasty decision on God's part. Jay B. McDaniel points out in his article "A God Who Loves Animals and a Church That Does the Same," in *Good News for Animals?* that "As Genesis proceeds, we see that meat eating is sanctioned by God only as a concession for human sin, not as something God ordained at the outset. And indeed it was human sin, not the rest of creation that disrupted the primal integrity" (89). And, while God may have given permission for human beings to consume animals in Genesis 9, the chapter does not end without God making a covenant with both human beings *and animals*, which God declares a total of five times from verses 9:9-9:17. How perplexed this leaves us. How do we understand a God who grants that animals be killed for human consumption, yet makes a covenant with the animals? Here, McDaniel suggests that "we might imagine divine covenant with animals as divine *communion* with animals" and that, "this communion can itself be understood in two ways: as divine empathy for animals in their life situations, and as divine *eros* for their well-being" (91). Whether or not we understand God's

intentions, we must acknowledge again that there are no precise answers to the animal question in the Bible; the scripture calls for care and rule, consumption and covenant.

In the Sinai covenant, with regards to animal wellbeing, Exodus 20:10 requires that all people *and their cattle* rest on the Sabbath. Likewise, Deuteronomy 25:4 prevents an owner from muzzling his ox "while it's threshing," most likely considering it cruel to work an ox in a field of food while denying it any of the food. Proverbs 12:10 states, "A righteous man knows the needs of his beast, but the compassion of the wicked is cruelty." Rest, food and compassion for animals are explicitly stated in these verses. Yet Hebrew scripture does frequently acknowledge and instruct animal sacrifice (Exodus 22:29, Leviticus 17:11), but it also condones human sacrifice (Judges 11:39). Eventually Hebrew Scripture portrays a God who grows tired of the animal offerings: Isaiah 1:11-16, Hosea 6:6, Amos 5:21-27, and Micah 6:6-8.

Illuminating the above verses does not clarify the final position Hebrew scripture takes on the welfare of animals. What it does accomplish, however, is the realization that the Hebrew scripture does not state explicitly, as Augustine and Aquinas did, that animals should be subjugated and used as human beings see fit, without consideration to their welfare. In "Old Testament Attitudes to Nature," John Austin Baker explains, "The Old Testament, then, does nothing to justify the charge that it represents an exploitative, humanly egotistical attitude to nature. Although it recognizes man's preying on nature as a fact, it characterizes that fact as a mark of man's decline from the first perfect intentions of God for him" (Linzey and Regan 17). Therefore, rather than precise answers to the animal wellbeing question, Hebrew scripture leaves us contemplating two things: (1) the authors did consider the wellbeing of animals to be important enough to mention several times in the scripture (2) after ten generations it was permissible to eat animals, but not before.

The New Testament also mentions nonhuman beings favorably: Luke 12:6 asks, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight.” But in the New Testament we also find contradiction in the many references allowing the consumption of nonhuman beings. In Mark 6:34-44, Jesus feeds fish to the multitudes. In Acts 10:12-13, Peter is instructed by a voice to “kill and eat” the creatures in his vision which included “all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air.” And, in the final word on the issue, Paul writes in Romans 14:1-3, “Those who eat [anything] must not despise those who abstain [from meat], and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them.” The New Testament verses regarding animals focus primarily on the consumption of, not care for, animals. This could possibly hint to us that taking the wellbeing of animals, at least the animals you claim as your own, into consideration was widely known in the Jewish world and presupposed so in the New Testament. In the end, unfortunately, we still are left contemplating the tension between God’s care for nonhuman creatures with the permission to kill and consume them.

This is in no way an attempt to extract all verses regarding animals that occur throughout the Bible. Rather, it is an attempt to demonstrate that Scripture does not overwhelmingly allow us to rule one way or another on the issue of the human responsibility to nonhuman beings, and because it does not explicitly guide, we must exercise reason based on other available resources such as modern science, including ethology, and our own experiences with the nonhuman world. Additionally, since scripture is not exact regarding its stance on animal welfare, we must question how Western Christianity reached the point at which its beliefs about nonhuman beings are far removed from the ambivalence of the scripture and have manifested themselves in domination, abuse, sport hunting, the extinction of entire species, and the killing of billions of

animals each year for food. John Passmore "suggests that the Christian idea of human beings as 'nature's absolute master' derives not from Hebrew teachings but rather from the Greeks, particularly from Aristotle and the Stoics" (12-15). Many of our Christian attitudes towards nature were founded upon Greek thought and (now outdated) science. It is important to explore these ideas in order to better grasp the roots of the problem.

Aristotle contributes to destruction of animals by articulating two ideas that will carry on into the twenty-first century: rationality and the hierarchy of nature. Aristotle believes that human beings, being of different origin than animals (which the Stoics were first to speculate), alone possess the ability to reason, and that animals merely "have the power of locomotion" (Linzey 17). While Aristotle does allow for animals to have emotions such as jealousy and courage, he sees animals as driven solely by desire and appetite, not thought (Steiner 63-74). But even Aristotle himself acknowledges that animals possess "voice," which "is but an indication of pleasure and pain" and that "their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another" (Aristotle 1.2 at 1253a 9-11).

By agreeing that animals do feel pain and can "voice" said pain, Aristotle kept animals in the realm of sentience and humane treatment. However, it is when Aristotle sees the universe and God's creation in a hierarchical manner that problems for animals truly begin:

> After the birth of animals, plants exits for their sake, and… the other animals exist for the sake of man, the tame for use and food, the wild if not all, at least the greater part of them, for food, and for the provision of clothing and various instruments. Now if nature makes nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man. *(*Aristotle 1.8 at 1256b 15-21)

A reading of Genesis should easily clear up any notion for Christians that nature was made for man; it is exact in stating nature was mad for God. However, present-day access to biblical passages is far better than in Aristotle's time, and thus his notion of a hierarchical universe with man at the apex of creation was perpetuated unchallenged. (It should be noted here that nothing scientific has ever supported the theory that man is the sole purpose for creation. In fact, geological time and evolution favor evidence to the contrary.) Although a hierarchy is not what Genesis expounds, it became the dominant way of translating Genesis due to Aristotle's influence. In *Animal Theology*, Andrew Linzey states, "Hebrew monarchy becomes created hierarchy," and the interpretation of Genesis views "nature as a hierarchical system in which it is assumed – as with human society – that the male is superior to the female, the female to the slave, and the slave to the beast and so on in declining intellectual order. The animals are as 'naturally' subject to humans as slaves are to their masters" (18).

Augustine continues to perpetuate a hierarchical nature, this time with rationality serving as the criteria by which one is deemed closer to God:

> Among living things, the sentient are placed above those which do not have sensation: animals above trees, for instance. And, among the sentient, the intelligent are placed above those which do not have intelligence: men, for example, are above cattle. And among the intelligent, the immortal, such as the angels, are placed above the mortal, such as men. (*City* bk. 11, ch. 18, p. 470)

Augustine, too, agrees that animals experience pain and prefer to avoid it, "For all living creatures show their love of bodily peace when they shun pain" (*City* bk. 19, ch. 14, p. 940). But he states it is of little concern to us: "We can perceive by their cries that animals die in pain, although we make little of this since the beast, lacking a rational soul, is not related to us by

common nature" (*Catholic* bk. 2, ch. 17, sec. 59, p. 105). In essence, Augustine believes that because animals do not have a rational soul, and do not share the same origin as human beings, human beings cannot be concerned with animal pain. Augustine did not find this notion in Christianity. Rather, he borrowed much of this from the Stoics, who were the first to "render moot the question of our commonalities with animals" and to seize human rationality "as the basis for a categorical claim to the moral superiority of human beings over animals" and thereby proclaim that human beings "owe no obligations whatsoever to animals" (Steiner 77-88).

Aquinas, rather than using sentience and intelligence as the hierarchical measure of closeness to God, believed in more of an ontological approach coupled with providence:

> For just as in the generation of things we perceive a certain order of procession of the perfect from the imperfect… so also is there order in the use of natural things; thus the imperfect are for the use of the perfect… as the plants make use of the earth for their nourishment, and animals make use of the plants, and man makes use of both plants and animals. Secondly, this is proved from the order of Divine Providence which always governs inferior things by superior. Wherefore, as man, being made to the image of God, is above other animals, these are rightly subject to his government. (Aquinas qtd. in Linzey and Regan 18-19)

Aquinas' doctrine "remains the dominant historical force throughout Western Christianity" (Linzey19). He continues with the notion that "dumb animals and plants are devoid of the life of reason," which is "a sign that they are naturally enslaved and accommodated to the uses of others," and, he believed, "there is no sin in using a thing for the purpose for which it is" (Aquinas pt II, question 64:I, p. 196-197). Linzey summarizes Aquinas' position on animals: "Considered *in themselves* animals have no reason and no rights, and humans no responsibility to

them" (15). Linzey finds it to be "problematic" that Augustine, the "great Christian scholar was not quite Christian or scriptural enough" to draw his theological arguments from "the humanitarian tradition of the Old Testament which acknowledged that humans had at least some responsibilities to animals, on the one hand, or to theological argument centered on the exercise of costly merciful loving expressed for us in Jesus Christ, on the other" (18). Because of Aquinas and his predecessors, Christian doctrine moved further away from considering animals and nature valuable in and of themselves, and closer to a human-centered ideology, marginalizing nonhuman beings and bringing them into consideration only when of service to human beings.

The Stoics stripped animals of their kinship with human beings. Aristotle took away their rationality. Augustine created a hierarchical nature in which the more rational human beings were to be served by the irrational nonhuman beings. Aquinas ontologically and providentially placed human beings as masters of nature and considered the subjugation and killing of animals to be natural. Each one of these assumptions took us further away from the kinship and admiration that our pre-Socratic Greek forefathers felt towards animals, and brought us closer to the total conquest and destruction we perpetrate towards animals today. They are all guilty of the speculation that has robbed billions upon billions of animals of benevolence and life. However, what occurs in the twenty-first century in regards to human control and abuses of nature – in terms of scale and cruelty – could not have been achieved without the endorsement of dualism and the mechanistic view of nature. These two models, which reside under the classical theology paradigm, have contributed the most to the torture and annihilation of animal life.

"Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit

nature for his proper ends" (White 1205). It was the mechanistic view of nature, perpetrated by Descartes, that transformed nature into a soul-less, lifeless machine, and promoted a mind/body dualism that invited human beings to abuse and ravage the earth and its creatures like never before. With his mind/body dualism, "Descartes intensified and systematized the distinction between us and the rest of the world. He divided everything into two fundamentally different orders of reality" (Birch and Cobb 99). Descartes argued that, though human beings are embodied like animals, the "essential being" of a human being is "immortal soul-substance," which "is separable from their corporeal being" (Steiner 151). Descartes conceived that God divinely influenced this special immortal-soul substance (*aka* mind) to interact with the human body. Animals, on the other hand, were considered completely corporeal, equipped only with a mortal soul incapable of interacting with the body, and devoid of the gift of divine influence. Animal action was perceived as purely body, *sans* thought: "All the actions of the brutes resemble only those which occur in us without the mind" (Descartes qtd. in Steiner 143). Reducing animals to purely corporeal beings took away their capability of thought, and thus deprived them of their awareness. Because animals are not aware in general, Descartes argued, they cannot be aware of "pain or any other sensation" (Steiner 148). Ultimately, animals became material automata with no experience of any kind.

Once Descartes accomplished separating human beings from animals via dualism, he was able to diminish all of nature to a product to be exploited for the benefit of human life. With the mechanistic view of nature, taken from Democritus, Descartes reduced nature to lifeless matter, "in which living wholes are understood to be utterly reducible to nonliving parts," with deterministic rather than creative responses, and utilitarian purposes rather than intrinsic value (McDaniel 139). Nature had no power in and of itself; it required human beings to exert their

power in nature. This doctrine became fundamental to Christianity because robbing nature of its inherent power benefited the church in several ways. As David Ray Griffin points out in *Two Great Truths*, the mechanistic view of nature was adopted by the church in an "effort to defeat another naturalistic tradition, which had gained strength since emerging in the Neoplatonic renaissance of the fifteenth century," that "involved a mixture of Neoplatonic, Hermetic, and Cabalistic ideas… called the 'magical' tradition because of its emphasis on influence at a distance"(13). The "magical" tradition "was a form of naturalism, which attributed even more power to nature than did Aristolelianism – not only the power of self-motion but also the power to exert and receive influence at a distance" (Griffin 13). The mechanistic view of nature denies any possibility of influence at a distance, and "it entails that one thing can influence another thing *only* by contact," and accidentally, not with purposive or creative behavior (Griffin 15, emphasis mine). An example often given is of billiard balls; they are independent yet "bouncing off each other"; they are "related, and produce changes in each other; but the relations and the resulting changes are purely 'accidental,' i.e., they do not enter into the essences of the balls[2]" (Cobb 22). However, if one can find in nature an explanation for matter that is moved outside of the "laws of nature" created by God, and without direct impact, and with purposive and creative behavior, then one gives the power to nature to act of its own volition, which greatly challenges the doctrine of God's omnipotence. Additionally, if there *does* exist a power inherent in nature, then the possibility arises that all people, not just Jesus, could participate in influence from a distance, i.e. miracles. Magical naturalism proponent Thomas Fludd argued that the "miracles reported in the Bible were not different in kind from extraordinary events that have occurred in other traditions" (Griffin 15). But, in relation to Christian faith, "the miracles of the New

[2] The term for this action is "efficient causation."

Testament had provided the main evidence that Christianity, alone among the religions of the world, had been ordained by God as *the* vehicle of ultimate truth and salvation. Without the evidence for of divine favor provided by supernatural attestations, the church's claim to possess the keys to the kingdom would have seemed groundless" (Griffin 14). The church was not willing to share its power with nature or human beings, and thus it had to promote a lifeless nature.

In addition to miracles, the church also preferred to keep their position as mediator between human beings and God, which magical naturalism also challenged with its doctrine of enthusiasm, since enthusiasts believed "that they had revelations that superseded the teachings of the established church" (Griffin 25). A direct line to God meant loss of power for the church, and it seriously challenged the social structure of the time. Ultimately, the legal-mechanistic (legal meaning the "laws of nature" God put forth for all of nature to abide by) view was endorsed because it "seemed to support the social status quo, and thereby the interests of the rich and powerful, whereas magical naturalism seemed to threaten those interests" (Griffin 15). In addition, "In those days, the status quo was undergirded by the authority of the institutional church, which was believed to have the 'keys to the kingdom' and thereby the power to determine the extramundane existence of human beings – whether they went to heaven or hell." (Griffin 15). The legal-mechanistic view defended Christian miracles, as well as church authority and God's preference for Christianity. The enslavement and suppression of nature was an indirect result of the quest for control of the hearts and minds of human beings, and dualism and mechanism became crucial to the paradigm of classical theism.

In essence, the church adopted the doctrines of dualism and mechanism to separate human beings from nature and nature from God. We have seen what happens when human

beings are separated from nature – they owe nature no moral obligation, no consideration, and no empathy. But it is God's role in nature in classical theism that also contributed to perpetuating the mechanistic view even further. God's role in nature as the transcendent God, who is omnipotent, omniscient, impassible, and immutable, also has a powerful impact on the way Christians see themselves and their role in nature. Christians, believing human beings to be created in the image of God, mimic God's relationship with nature: "human beings are to behave toward animate and inanimate nature in the way God behaves toward the whole created order" (Tanner 104). As God is to the world, human beings are to their environment. Human beings see themselves as removed from nature (transcendent); they are lords over nature (rulers of the kingdom), and they alone have knowledge (reason) surpassing any knowledge found in nature (omniscience). Like an impassible and immutable God, human beings also refuse to be moved emotionally or physically by anything – any injustice or suffering – found in nature. Christians mimic the God of the classical theism paradigm using the models that had created the paradigm. Paradoxically, the God of the Bible is not transcendent, impassible, or immutable, and is benevolent towards his creation, quite unlike human beings towards nature. Evidence for God's omnipotence and omniscience is debatable. Therefore, the models that we mimic are not even scripturally supported; they are created as secondary and tertiary doctrines to support primary doctrines of Christian faith, which are scripturally sound. For that reason, it is not the scripture that requires our attention if we are to change our attitudes and our behaviors toward nature; rather, it is the models themselves that must be reexamined and challenged.

As Ian Barbour explains in *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, "Religious models… lead to beliefs that correlate patterns in human experience," and models

> are abstract symbol systems, which inadequately and selectively represent particular aspects of the world for specific purposes… Models, on this reading, are to be taken seriously but not literally; they are neither literal pictures nor useful fictions but limited and inadequate ways of imagining what is not observable. They make tentative ontological claims that there are entities in the world something like those postulated in the models. (117-119)

Although Barbour warns us of the limitations of models and states that they are not to be taken literally, he notes that such models, "throughout many generations find continued literary expression and are used in liturgy and devotional practices" (120). In *The Liberation of Life,* Birch and Cobb confirm: "The continuing hold of the mechanistic model, despite its manifest difficulties and limitations, indicates that it is closely connected with widespread habits of thought and basic modes of perception" (84). Human beings come to understand these models, or doctrines, as fact and as inseparable from our religious beliefs. Subsequently, they have shaped not only our beliefs, but also our societies, and thus our behaviors and attitudes. Models, without having to accurately represent reality, dictate human behavior. As for paradigms, which use the models to shape our worldview and further enable our behaviors, Barbour notes that they are "highly resistant to falsification" and that even discordant data does not "lead directly to the overthrow of a paradigm" (128). It is difficult to directly change the paradigms themselves, although "ad hoc modifications" can be introduced to help overthrow the paradigm (128). To summarize, we have models that do not have to be accurate in order to be believed and followed, and we have paradigms that are resistant to change. In this scenario, it is the classical theology paradigm that needs to be challenged through "ad hoc modifications" to its models of dualism and mechanism and, through those challenges, subsequently the human relationship to nature.

This is the necessary approach to animal welfare within Christian faith because the classical paradigm, whether we are aware or not, has constructed these "beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape, reflect, and explain our view of ourselves and our world" (Warren 6).

Christianity, through classical theology, has given Christians permission to disregard suffering in the natural world, and to destroy animals for human benefit. To make matters worse, because Christianity has been the dominant religion in the Western world, this paradigm has penetrated science, technology, and culture, and has shaped even the secular world. It is because of this ability to influence that it becomes imperative to reexamine the false or unproven notions of classical theology, from its biological claims to its characteristics of God, and put forth new models and a new paradigm based on new scientific and empirical evidence. Additionally, that which we cannot prove scientifically or empirically we must acknowledge as theoretical, not fact.

A new overarching paradigm and new models based on modern-day science and empirical evidence are needed to help "guide people toward new ways of thinking, feeling and acting" towards nature and its nonhuman beings (McDaniel 125). The paradigm that best accomplishes this task and challenges dualism and mechanistic nature, while reevaluating the human relationship with nature, is process theology. Process theology posits a new ecological understanding of the universe, interweaving God, human beings and nonhuman beings into a model focused on our relationships with each other and within our environment. After achieving the shift in paradigm from classical theology to process theology, a new ethical framework is necessary, since until now ethics have centered on human beings and their relationships to each other. One ethical framework that includes nonhuman beings in its consideration is the reverence for life ethics of Dr. Albert Schweitzer. Process theology and reverence for life ethics are quite

compatible and complementary in creating a new way of viewing human beings and nonhuman beings in their interactions and cohabitation of the earth, as will be shown in chapter two. With classical theology, we were lead down a destructive path based on false assumptions about man and nature. However, through the science and empirical evidence of process thought and the rationality and life application of reverence for life, we can address those assumptions and create a new worldview and new standard of behavior.

CHAPTER 2

COMBINING PROCESS THEOLOGY AND REVERENCE FOR LIFE ETHICS FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

In 1923 Albert Schweitzer published *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization* and *Civilization and Ethics.* In 1929 *Process and Reality,* a Gifford Lecture series given by Alfred North Whitehead in 1927 was published. Then, in 1936 Albert Schweitzer published the article "The Ethics of Reverence for Life" in the periodical *Christendom*. Thus was born a new way of conceiving the world in a life-centered manner, with a universal ethics to accompany the new view. Process theology and reverence for life ethics are incredibly compatible, achieving a life-centered and ecological "web of life" paradigm (worldview) that acknowledges the value, interconnectedness, and interdependence of all creatures. Both process theology and reverence for life challenge the classical paradigm as a whole, and the models of dualism and mechanistic nature in particular. Combining process theology with reverence for life gives us a new worldview and a means of considering all creatures in our daily lives.

Process theology challenges classical theology by promoting "temporality, interaction, and mutual relatedness" in lieu of the classical model of a static, dualistic and mechanistic worldview (Barbour 293). Process theology views God, the world, and human knowledge of the world to be ever changing, and in a state of "becoming" rather than "being." It conceives of a persuasive, rather than an omnipotent, God, who is both transcendent and immanent in the world,

and in whom the ordered world exists (Panentheism). God does not lord over the world in a removed and unchanging mode, but he does act in the world through ideal forms and persuasion, as evident in evolution. And, unlike the classical God, the process God suffers with his creation and is changed by his creation, which is more akin to the biblical God. Whitehead refers to this as "the consequent nature of God.[3]" The extent to which a mutable and passible God of empathy and persuasion, who is immanent in the ever-changing world, challenges the classical worldview to include nonhuman beings is vast. With this new idea of God, we could argue for human beings to change their notion of what it means to be created in the image of God, which would shift our behaviors from a transcendent ruler-lord in nature to a compassionate steward immanent in nature. Or, we could argue that if God suffers with his creation, we should keep from inflicting pain and suffering on all of his creation. We could also argue that if God acts through persuasion and evolution, and animals are included in evolutionary change, then God must act through animals as well. The arguments are numerous, and Christian beliefs about the relationship between God and the world God created are of critical importance to the relationship between human beings and nature. For the purposes of this paper, we will focus less on the characteristics of God and more on the world that God created and acts in.

The crux of process theology is the ecological model of nature and its actual occasions. Rather than viewing nature as a hierarchical, lifeless machine, process thought views nature as a "web of life," in which all of God's creations –atoms, cells organisms, plants, animals and human beings – are integral and creatively acting parts of the web. It is a model of "internal relations," which "views each living thing, and each component of living thing, as part of a

[3] The consequent nature of God determines God, as fully actual, to be "responsive to and receptive of the worldly actualization." This responsiveness includes "a sympathetic feeling with the worldly beings, all of whom have feeling." John Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition.* Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976. (48)

system," and each event "is a synthesis of relations to other events" (Birch and Cobb 95, 83). The web of life view states that "living things behave as they do only in interaction with the other things which constitute their environments," and "elements of the structure at each level operate in patterns of interconnectedness which are not mechanical" (Birch and Cobb 83). It claims that all creatures are partially creative and partially unpredictable, in ways in which they respond to, and integrate, environmental influences. Additionally, all matter is more alive than dead, and all organisms have intrinsic value. The world is "interdependent and interfusing rather than dualistic and dichotomized," and "living wholes, such as the human self or an animal psyche, are very much influenced by, and yet more than, the parts of which they are composed" (McDaniel 140). According to process thought, all life in the universe represents individually an entity, or "node," of experience on the web of life. From the smallest subatomic particle to the most intelligent human, each node is interconnected because each node experiences *something* to be alive, and by being alive, each node affects the entire web.

As a living node on the web, one's existence is affected by the lives and actions of others, and ones own life and actions affect the existence of others. In this regard, the web of life view is that the biological world is an "organism, which is a highly integrated and dynamic pattern of interdependent events" (Barbour 285). Rather than viewing all beings as independent *substances*, as we have viewed living beings in the past, process thought encourages "event thinking," which views beings as experiences, and as comprised of momentary events, or drops of experience, that deliberately and creatively react to influences from the past. Whitehead uses the term "actual occasions" to describe such events, and "actual entity" to describe the being that experiences the actual occasions. "The term 'occasion' emphasizes that they are events – momentary happenings – while the term 'actual' emphasizes that they are the entities that are real in the fullest sense of

the term" and that they "act" and "exert energy" (Griffin 84). An event "arises from the totality of causal influences on it from the past," and "then completes itself by deciding exactly how to respond to those influences in light of its own aims" (Griffin 84). Not to be confused with experiences, an actual occasion is a *moment* of experience. "From this point of view," note Birch and Cobb, "an atom is not a substantial entity but a multiplicity of events interconnected with each other and with other events in a describable pattern.

For example, a mouse is an extensive society of events, electronic, cellular and organismic, interconnected in complex patterns (Griffin 86). A mouse is both an experience and is comprised of events; it experiences, as do the cells it is comprised of. Additionally, the mouse (and its cells) has creative freedom on how it responds to the events acting upon it, which influences other events going forward: "Each level of organization – atom, molecule, cell, organ, organism, community – receives from and in turn influences the patterns of activity at other levels" (Barbour 285). This is drastically different from the mechanistic view because (1) it allows all actual occasions, or beings other than human beings, to make decisions and have purposive activity and (2) it states that actual occasions "exert final as well as efficient causation[4]," whereas a mechanistic nature only allowed for matter to exert efficient causation. Event thinking is important to note because Birch and Cobb assert that a shift from the mechanistic model to a web of life model is impossible without shifting from substance thinking to event thinking (87). "[Their] argument is that it is now time to seek the explanation of behaviour at one level in terms of behaviour at other levels and to recognize that behaviour at

[4] In *Process Theology*, John Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin state that final causation, as opposed to efficient causation, allows for an occasion of experience not to be determined solely by the past, but to have creative influence and "take control of its own existence, completing what others had started." Final causation "is the power of the end or purpose" and "the purpose of every occasion of experience is enjoyment." John Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition.* Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976. (25-27)

any level is to be accounted for in terms of complex interacting. This complex interacting is an event, not a substance" (Birch and Cobb 86). Our world is a "network of interactions," with interdependent events, in which "every event has an essential reference to other times and places" and "every entity is initially constituted by its relationships" (Barbour 285).

If process theology encourages a change in worldview and a shift to event thinking, reverence for life encourages a change in behavior to meet the demands of the new worldview. In *Letters 1905-1965*, Schweitzer writes, "The ethics of reverence for life is nothing but Jesus' great commandment to love – a commandment that is reached by thinking; religion and thinking meet in the mysticism of belonging to God through love" (123). In *Out of My Life and Thought*, Schweitzer says the ethic of reverence for life "is Jesus' ethic of love widened to universality" (235). Reverence for life is the love of neighbor extended beyond human beings into the nonhuman world. It is the acknowledgment that all life on earth desires to remain alive and has enjoyment in their lives. And, it is the desire to help extend the life and enjoyment of others, and not hinder it. At the heart of reverence for life are will-to-live, empathy, and reasonable thought followed by reasonable action. Because both human beings and nonhuman beings are connected by experience, and all possess intrinsic value, human beings are capable of empathizing with nonhuman beings in their plight to continue life. Human beings can achieve empathy with other life through reason, which leads to compassionate human action that helps all creatures to maintain their lives and the enjoyment of life. Crucial to arriving at and understanding these elements is rational thought. Schweitzer states, "The primary characteristic of this [reverence for life] ethic is that it is rational, having been developed as a result of thought upon life" (Meyer and Bergel 129). Genuine thought upon and examination of life is how Schweitzer moves from recognizing the will-to-live present in all, to empathizing with all, to right action towards all.

While he ultimately arrives at an absolute ethic, admittedly unattainable due to the "law of necessity," his ethical ideal attempts to show "individuals how to deal directly and naturally with reality (*Civilization* 26)," rather than addressing "façade problems – questions as to the reality of the world and the problem of knowledge" (Schweitzer, as quoted in Meyer and Bergel 124). Ultimately, his goal was not academic, which gained him numerous critics; rather, it was an attempt to "touch on man's daily experience" and perhaps exert "permanent pressure upon him" to rethink his worldview and change his behaviors (*Civilization* 26). Before we can understand how reverence for life, along with process theology, calls us to make those alterations, it is important to note two elements essential to understanding and employing reverence for life. They are: resignation and world-and life-affirmation. A brief explanation of each will suffice for the purposes of this paper.

Schweitzer believes "Resignation is the vestibule through which we enter ethics" and he utilizes resignation in two ways (*Civilization* 247). First, he believes it is necessary for us to concede that we cannot know everything about the world. He says of it, "Resignation as to knowledge of the world is for me not an irretrievable plunge into a skepticism which leaves us to drift about in life like a derelict vessel. I see in it that effort of honesty which we must venture to make in order to arrive at the serviceable world-view which hovers within sight" (*Civilization* xv). For Schweitzer, no worthwhile worldview and subsequent ethical system can be achieved under the guise of complete knowledge of the world. Before we can attempt to ascertain any sort of system or view, we must first confess that our knowledge is restricted and the unknown is far greater than the known. We must resign ourselves to the fact that our knowledge is limited. Since Schweitzer believes a full understanding of the world to be impossible, it follows that any worldview failing "to start from resignation in regard to knowledge is artificial and a mere

fabrication, for it rests upon an inadmissible interpretation of the universe" (*Civilization* xv). This is compatible with the process notion that the universe, in its ever-changing state, cannot ever be fully known: "We have seen that process thought is in tune with the contemporary view of nature as a dynamic process of becoming, always changing and developing, radically temporal in character. There is an incomplete cosmos still coming into being" (Barbour 324).

Second, just as we must resign that we cannot possess complete knowledge of the world, we also must allow for failure when attempting to achieve an absolute ethic in our daily lives because, "an absolute ethic calls for the creating of perfection in this life," which "cannot be completely achieved" (Meyer and Bergel 130). For Schweitzer, the inability to achieve the absolute ethic "does not really matter" (Meyer and Bergel 130). The absolute ethic must remain the goal whether or not it is attainable. The absolute ethic "demands of one what is actually beyond his strength," such as the call to love your neighbor: "The ethic cannot be fully carried out, without involving the possibility of complete sacrifice of self" (Meyer and Bergel 131). However, the absolute ethic of reverence for life must remain high and unattainable because, as Mike Martin states in *Albert Schweitzer's Reverence for Life: Ethical Idealism and Self-Realization*, "A vision of perfection pushes us to unfold our highest capacities, and it pulls us towards ideals of sympathetic engagement with other life so as to establish wider circles of meaning" (23). For example, Christians attempting to live in a Christ-like manner know that the endeavor is an impossible feat in the daily lives of even the most pious. Yet, Christ as the exemplar of ethical behavior is still very necessary to Christianity. It is the far-reaching goal that is set out before Christians that lures them to better behavior. Daily they fail, and daily they begin again in hopes of doing better. The cycle of attempt and failure pervades the challenge of reverence for life, but equipped with an understanding of resignation, it is possible to continue to

work towards achieving the ideal without living in a constant state of failure or guilt. There will always be circumstances beyond our control and choices we must make that force us to fall short of the ideal. However, resignation gives one the option to continue to practice toward the ideal, rather than relinquishing the ideal altogether. Schweitzer calls resignation the "quiet triumph" in which "the will-to-live celebrates at the hour of its greatest need over the circumstances of life" (*Philosophy* 284).

In terms of world-and life-affirmation, Schweitzer argues that the fact we choose to live out life (will-to-live) serves as proof that "existence" is preferred "against non-existence," which "affirms life as something possessing value in itself" (*Philosophy* 57). Living beings do not typically and *en masse* attempt to end their lives, but rather we strive to "raise existence, in so far as our influence can affect it, to its highest level of value" (*Philosophy* 57). Additionally, our actions are "directed to the improvement of the living conditions of individuals, of society, of nations and of humanity" (*Philosophy* 57). This leads Schweitzer to believe that all creatures are participating in affirmative world and life views. Conversely, world-and life-negation would result in "man regarding existence as he experiences it in himself and as it is developed in the world as something meaningless and sorrowful, and he resolves accordingly (a) to bring life to a standstill in himself by mortifying his will-to-live, and (b) to renounce all activity which aims at improvement of the conditions of this world" (*Indian Thought* 1-2). By and large, beings do not participate in world-and life-negation. All creatures strive to survive and flourish in their environments. While some human beings do choose to end their lives, such a choice is not reflective of the entire human species. Eventually Schweitzer takes world-and life-affirmation a step further into *ethical* world-and life-affirmation, which is the unceasing urge "to serve all that lives" (*Indian Thought* 2). With resignation and world-and life-affirmation understood, we can

now examine the worldview of process theology and its attunement with reverence for life ethics.

Viewing living organisms as their own subjects of experience follows a shift in view from substance thinking to event thinking. Whereas the classical paradigm treats "living organisms as objects to be manipulated," process thought's event thinking calls for recognition of subjective experience in all actual entities (Birch and Cobb 1). According to Birch and Cobb, "For us to say that something experiences is to say that it is not merely an object in our world of experience but also a subject of relations in its own right. It is acted upon and it acts" (123). Consequently, if the definition of experience is "to be acted upon and act," then we must apply the label of "experience" or "subject of relations in its own right" to all in the universe that is acted upon and acts. This includes subatomic particles, cells, organs, animals and human beings, and every living being in between. Therefore, all beings experience, and since this is the most basic element of each being, it is said that all beings *are* experience (and are composed of occasions of experience) (Griffin 78). The process concept of universal experience is easier grasped through the lens of Albert Schweitzer's "will-to-live." For Schweitzer, the will-to-live is, at its most basic, that which is inherent in us and connects all beings throughout the universe. Schweitzer says of this theory,

> Thus, if we ask, 'What is the immediate fact of my consciousness? To what do I always return?' we find the simple fact of consciousness is this, *I will to live.* Through every stage of life, this is the one thing I know about myself. I do not say, 'I am life'; for life continues to be a mystery too great to understand. I only know that I cling to it. I fear its cessation – death. I dread its diminution – pain. I seek its enlargement – joy. (Schweitzer, as quoted in Meyer and Bergel 126-127)

In process thought, living beings experience *something* by being alive, and in our wills-to-live we are all programmed with the desire to maintain that experience. In both process thought and reverence for life, all creatures, whether or not they can consciously acknowledge or verbally declare so, possess experience and the desire to continue to experience. Experience is granted to all creatures by recognizing the very basic experience in ourselves: "As in my own will-to-live there is a longing for wider life and for the mysterious exaltation of the will-to-live which we call pleasure, with dread of annihilation and of the mysterious depreciation of the will-to-live all around me, whether it can express itself before me or remains dumb" (*Civilization* 242). All creatures inherently possess the will-to-live: therefore all creatures are inherently determined to live their lives to the fullest while increasing joy and avoiding pain (*Civilization* 213). The will-to-live is where Schweitzer believes all "true philosophy" should begin: "I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live" (*Civilization* 242). In *Process and Reality*, Alfred North Whitehead states similarly that experience is the "self-enjoyment of being one among many, and of being one arising out of the composition of many" (220).

Both Schweitzer and Whitehead acknowledge the ecological view that we are creatures amongst creatures that create an entire ecological system. Although we may think of ourselves as individuals and individually enjoy our experiences, our experiences and our existence are interconnected to and interdependent on all other life around us: "Everything, accordingly, which meets me in the world of phenomena, is a manifestation of the will-to-live" (*Philosophy* 237). Each organism in our universe is a "teleological center of life, striving to preserve itself and realize its good in its own unique way" (Taylor 121). Therefore, if we can understand that our own experience – our existence – is dependent on the other life around us, then the experience – or existence – of the other life around us is dependent on our experience.

The experience that we all share – the experience to be alive and the will to continue life – is our kinship; it is what binds us as living creatures. Recognizing this in nonhuman life is crucial to viewing nature post-mechanistically and post-dualistically. It is putting the life back into nature that mechanism and dualism took away, and acknowledging that we are all interconnected and we all have the desire to live. Mike Martin explains, "The more we affirm our will to live while appreciating how other organisms also struggle to survive and develop, the more we experience a sense of kinship with other life" (33). Schweitzer believes that human beings should "experience the inner-relatedness that exists among all living creatures," and not just experience it with human beings or "highly intelligent" animals (*Revelation* 24). It is something we should extend beyond ourselves and those who are identifiably similar, and something that we should recognize in all life. Process theologian Jay B. McDaniel believes that to employ a web of life view, or to be "life centered," is "to live out of a sense of kinship with all life, not human life alone" (15). He illuminates, "in terms of sheer numbers the vast majority of our neighbors are plants and other animals," and, from a Christian perspective, "to exclude them as we attempt to live out Christian love is to exclude more than ninety-nine percent of our neighbors" (15). When we can see that all beings are experience and that experience is the will-to-live, then we can see a connection with all creatures. This is the kinship we share, and the origin from which we should view our world and act accordingly. Additionally, because of our connection as experiencing entities, we can appreciate that all creatures possess intrinsic value.

"My life carries its own meaning in itself. This meaning lies in my living out the highest idea which shows itself in my will-to-live, the idea of reverence for life. With that for a starting point I give value to my own life and to all the will-to-live which surrounds me, I persevere in activity and I produce values" (Civilization xvii - xviii). Schweitzer, recognizing his own will-to-

live experience, which correlates with a reverence for his own life, identifies the will-to-live experience in other creatures, and thereby acknowledges a reverence for *their* lives. From here, he perceives the value in his own life, and allows that same value to be present in other life; he permits the possibility that other beings possess value in and of themselves, not just human beings. Birch and Cobb agree: “If there is intrinsic value anywhere, there is intrinsic value everywhere” (152).

Unfortunately, engrained in most Western Christian theology is the notion that the world was created for human beings, and, therefore, nature’s sole purpose, and thereby sole worth, is to serve human life. Any life we take note of around us is typically either that of other human life, or nonhuman life that somehow benefits human life. Within this context, nothing is inherently valuable, save human beings. The only value found in nonhuman beings is the value of service and benefit it provides to human beings. This anthropocentrism has plagued our worldview, and subsequently our scientific and technological endeavors, and has helped to further perpetuate dualism and the mechanistic view of nature. However, just as with dualism and the mechanistic view, there is no biblical or scientific evidence to support the idea that man is the sole purpose of all of God’s creation. Schweitzer reminds us,

> We like to image that man is nature’s goal; but facts do not support that belief. Indeed, when we consider the immensity of the universe, we must confess that man is insignificant. And certainly man’s life can hardly be considered the goal of the universe. Its margin of existence is always precarious. Study of the geologic periods shows that. So does the battle against disease. When one has seen whole populations annihilated by sleeping sickness, as I have, one ceases to imagine that human life is nature’s goal. (Barsam 147)

Both Schweitzer and proponents of process theology agree that there is no evidence pointing to human beings as the reason for the creation of the world. Instead of human beings having the monopoly on purpose and value in the world, the process worldview posits that all creatures created by God and comprised of their own subjective experience have purpose and value: “It follows from a process perspective that the entire cosmos is alive with subjectivity, with aims and interests, and hence with intrinsic value” (McDaniel 77). In Whitehead’s words, ‘the experience enjoyed by an actual entity” is “what the actual entity is in itself, for itself’ (Whitehead 81). All organisms are experiencing, creative entities, and “units of enjoyment.” This is drastically different from the “experiencing and nonexperiencing actualities” of dualism (Cobb 17), which turned all nonhuman beings into “vacuous actualities, void of subjective experience” (Whitehead 253) by claiming that they exist but have no aims or interests, no purpose or enjoyment, and no value in and of themselves. Both process thought and reverence for life ethics deem animals (and all of nature) valuable in and of themselves, rather than the current mechanistic view, which places value on animals in terms of their extrinsic value. McDaniel refers to intrinsic value as “the value that each and every being has in and for itself,” and states, “to eliminate anthropocentrism is to recognize the intrinsic value of life” (52, 60). An anthropocentric view essentially places the human species at the center of everything and gives them total possession of value. As we demonstrated above, however, if all beings are composed of events and if “experience is attributed to all such events” and “experience is “always valuable,” then all events are valuable (Birch and Cobb 141). If all events are valuable, “all things therefore [because they are events] have some intrinsic value,” not solely human beings (Birch and Cobb 141). Process thought calls for a universal value, which is the “experiential richness and self concern” of all organism (McDaniel 79).

Within a Christian context, Schubert Ogden explains universal value: “Because God’s love is subject to no bounds and excludes nothing from its embrace, there is no creature’s interest that is not also God’s interest and, therefore, necessarily included in the redeeming love of God” (Ogden qtd. in Pinches 87). For process thought and reverence for life, it is necessary to apply a universal, intrinsic value to all creatures because “when intrinsic value is attributed to things other than the human there is a strong tendency to treat all things as having infinite value” (Birch and Cobb 141). If we are to overcome our dualistic and mechanistic tendencies, which are unfounded and unsupported by the sciences, then we can move forward in recognizing a common thread in all life. If we can appreciate there is a commonality that we all share, perhaps we can heed the call to empathize with other creatures that is so vital to Schweitzer’s ethics.

If human beings can recognize a kinship with and intrinsic value within nonhuman life, they may extend empathy to nonhuman beings, an empathy that is integral to reverence for life. In order for this to occur, we must start from our own will-to-live and contemplate what we know of our own desires to maintain life and enjoyment while avoiding pain and suffering, and then we must transfer this knowledge into the nonhuman world. Admittedly, this does not sound ideal at first, as it runs the risk of anthropomorphizing nonhuman beings; however, we can refrain from projecting our humanness onto nonhuman beings and merely accept that “the non-human world can only be adequately understood in terms of what human beings know directly and immediately – human experience” (Birch and Cobb 139). Since, at the time, this is our only means of knowing the inner-workings of the nonhuman world, we must use it to allow for similar experiences in nonhuman beings, and grant them empathy when we understand the will-to-live to be hindered in any way. Schweitzer states: “If I am a thinking being, I must regard

other life than my own with equal reverence. For I shall know that it longs for fullness and development as deeply as I do myself" (Meyer and Bergel 129).

Process thought also calls for empathy. McDaniel states "perfect empathy" is empathy that "involves sympathetic understanding of the 'inner perspective' of individual living beings." Empathy, he clarifies, is not watching "creatures from afar, observing their behaviors as from a distance," rather it requires one to feel "creatures from their own point of view: that is, from a point of view that overlaps and coindwells their own perspective" (29). Perfect empathy "includes a sense of lamentation and a yearning for things to be different," and it is "divine knowledge" meaning that "it is not knowing about the creature; it is knowing with the creature" (30- 31). An empathy gained from deep within our own lives and reflected upon cannot be achieved without thought or experience, and it is not an insincere endeavor. It is a task that our current worldview does not prepare us for. And, while it may seem odd at first to use our own desire for life and our own aims and interests to reflect upon the life, aims and interest of, for example, an elephant, this is something we must practice if we are to agree to an ecological model. We must see ourselves in others so we may empathize with others. Perhaps then we can see that our human destruction of the earth – pollution, global-warming, deforestation, and extinction– are causing great suffering to our kin.

To accept an ecological model is to recognize that we all have will-to-live and intrinsic value, and therefore we extend empathy universally. However, it is necessary to go further. Not only must we accept this new model and change our attitudes toward life, we also must *act* within the framework of our new model. We must act within the web of life to preserve the web by employing reverence for life ethics. We should regard as wrong that which "annihilates, hampers, or hinders life," and promote the "saving or helping of life, the enabling of whatever

life [we] can to attain its highest development" (Schweitzer, as quoted in Meyer and Bergel 129). Reaching this point, unfortunately, is a difficult task with many differing approaches. Yet, if we stay true to the web of life model, avoiding any deviation from interrelatedness and interdependence, such as anthropocentrism, while employing the ethics of reverence for life, then the goal is achievable.

The task is challenging, and even Schweitzer did not always live up to the task of fully grasping the web of life position (which, in his defense, was only in its beginning stages). While he proclaimed the will-to-live and value in all creatures – both plant life and animal life – and he acted accordingly, increasingly becoming more life-centered in his behaviors throughout his life, he did not fully escape the notion that human beings were somehow apart from a mysterious and often merciless nature:

> Nature knows no reverence for life. It produces life in thousands of the most meaningful ways and destroys it in thousands of the most senseless ways… Creatures live at the cost of the lives of other creatures. Nature allows them to commit the most terrible cruelties. Nature is beautiful and sublime, viewed from the outside. But to read in its book is horrible. And its cruelty is so senseless! (*Revelations* 15-16)

However, at times Schweitzer saw the interrelatedness of nature and our kinship with it: "So nature compels us to recognize the fact of mutual dependence, each life necessarily helping the other lives which are linked to it. In the very fibers of our being, we bear within ourselves the fact of solidarity of life. Our recognition of it expands with thought" (Schweitzer, as quoted in Meyer and Bergel 135). He recognizes the human desire to transcend nature and harness its power, but he also concedes that this leads to unnatural results: "By the power we obtain over the

forces of nature we do indeed free ourselves from nature, and make her serviceable to us, but at the same time we thereby also cut ourselves loose from her, and slip into conditions of life whose unnatural character brings with it manifold dangers" (*Civilization* 268).

At one time, Schweitzer recognizes that the patterns in nature are so profoundly telling us that we are all a part of a whole, discernable by mere examination of nature itself. At another time, Schweitzer sees nature as a mysterious cruelty, immoral and unexplainable, with human beings residing outside of, and perhaps even above the madness. Rather than viewing human beings as separate and above nature, we should view "human life in its psychological as well as physical dimensions is an expression of, rather than an exception to, nature" (McDaniel 25). If we are different from anything found in nature, it is only by degree. But the misunderstanding is not unique to Schweitzer, and this has been the most difficult challenge to overcome in shifting to an organismic and life-centered worldview.

In "Creation, Environmental Crisis, and Ecological Justice," Kathryn Tanner demonstrates how nature-inclusive approaches have a tendency to perpetuate, at the very least, the notion that human beings are in a special position to God and nature, if not complete anthropocentrism. She highlights three popular strands of nature-advocating attempts: (1) imitation of God's rule, (2) a great chain of being, and (3) stewardship (103-113). Although proponents of each of these strands attempt to contribute positively to the lives of nonhuman beings, Tanner claims that they are still fundamentally anthropocentric, and thus fall short of attaining a truly ecological methodology.

The model that proposes imitation of God's rule aims to parallel human relations with nature after God's relationship to the world. It states that human beings "alone among creatures are like God" because human beings were created in the image of God according to Genesis

1:26-30 (Tanner 104). Therefore, as God rules the world, human beings must rule the earth. One problem with is approach is that throughout Christian history God's rule has been viewed in a myriad of ways that has lead to the very problem we are now attempting to repair, including an unchanging and sovereign ruler in classical theology, and a removed and unsympathetic clockmaker in deism. Following these models of God, human beings saw themselves as superior to, separate from, and dominant over nature, which ultimately justified human exploitation of nature, and which is not in agreement with an ecological model. However, the imitation of God's rule is not completely void of virtue if it is achieved within the process framework and in imitation of a persuasive God who suffers and changes with his creation. The crucial piece of this approach is found in what model of God is used. Nevertheless, another problem with this approach is that human rule, benevolent or not, gives human beings a power over nature that proponents of ecological models do not believe exists. It gives human beings "an illusory sense of their own powers of mastery vis-à-vis the natural world," and it raises human beings out of nature, as opposed to locating them in nature (Tanner 105). This supposed transcendence and power over nature is mechanistic at its core; it presupposes that nature does not have power in and of itself, and can only be changed, for better or for worse, by human intervention. This approach does not work with an ecological model.

The great chain of being model is a step closer to an ecological model because it views human beings as a part of nature, rather than separate from nature. Human beings are "parts of an immense whole arranged to suit God's purposes" (Tanner 106). In this view, the "lower links" on the chain (nonhuman beings) have been created to "promote the functions of those higher up" (human beings), while human beings have as their task to consider the ways they "affect lower ones by achieving the ultimate purposes for which those lower beings were created" (Tanner

106). This is an incredibly anthropocentric view, which mimics those views of Augustine and Aquinas, and further perpetuates the notion that the nonhuman world was created for the benefit of human beings. As has been discussed previously, there is no scientific or empirical evidence to support this notion, and to agree to this approach is to once again agree to part of the problem, rather than the solution. This is anthropocentric and hierarchical, for which there is no room on the web of life.

Stewardship is the most popular trend in animal-and nature-inclusive theologies. Proponents of this approach view human beings as the caretakers of the earth and all of its creatures; they are "the primary workers" and "primary administrators" of "God's will for the world" (Tanner 110). This is a drastic change from the classical notion that human beings have dominion, which has been understood as domination over the earth, and have no relationship to the earth save what it can provide human beings. Yet Tanner sees this approach as too anthropocentric, although less so than the other strands, to ultimately work with her proposed view of "creaturehood," which is, in essence, an ecological view. She claims that stewardship places human beings in too important of a role – as God's "administrators" on earth – which gives human beings "certain legal rights or entitlements of use with respect to nonhuman beings," which, given our history and our current ecological crisis, is perhaps not prudent (110, 112). However, Tanner agrees that the stewardship approach is beneficial in that it limits human entitlement and action to God's purpose and will. Human beings must act according to God's will, and in this case, they must to promote the wellbeing of all creatures. Furthermore, Tanner acknowledges that the stewardship approach does not condone the notion that the earth was created *for* human beings. Instead it is aligned with the notion that God created everything for

God's pleasure, and the earth, in a sense, is "on loan" to human beings to take care of while we are here (111).

This approach should not be entirely dismissed because it is human-centered. It promotes action, which is imperative to combat the complacency that human beings have accepted towards the exploitation of nonhuman beings. Rather than giving human beings special rights, it can be seen as actually taking away rights presupposed by human beings. It is no longer the human right to use nature in any way human beings desire. Instead, human beings must take care of nature, value it, and even serve it. There are components of this approach that can be used within the ecological model. If one were asked with which approach Schweitzer would be aligned, one would place him at the nexus of stewardship and the ecological model. Schweitzer is not alone in his stewardship leanings. Andrew Linzey in his "generosity paradigm"[5] and Jay McDaniel in his description of "moral agents"[6] both call for human action to right the wrongs of human despotism of nature and to care for animals in ways that only human beings are capable of. Ultimately, the call to action of the stewardship model is beneficial, but it must be combined

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[5] In *Animal Theology*, Linzey calls for a "generosity paradigm," in which the "higher" sacrifice for the "lower," and "the strong, powerful and rich to give to those who are vulnerable, poor or powerless." He states, "In this respect, it is sheer vulnerability and powerlessness of animals, and correspondingly our absolute power over them which strengthens and compels the response of moral generosity." Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (University of Illinois Press ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 32.

[6] In *Of God and Pelicans*, Jay B. McDaniel writes that humans have moral agency, meaning they possess a conscience and are held "responsible for his or her decisions in relations to other beings." A moral patient is a "moral beneficiary," which is a "being who deserves the respect and care of moral agents." As moral agents, humans must "be as sensitive as we can" in regards to the interests and needs of animals, and we must "avoid unnecessary pain and to pursue pleasure are persistently violated by factory farming techniques such as the debeaking of chickens and the immobilization of veal calves." Jay B. McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans: A Theology of Reverence for Life*. 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 71.

with a less anthropocentric worldview, which is found in process theology. In addition, action must be derived from rational thought and empathy, both found in Schweitzer's reverence for life ethics. Bearing in mind the attempts above, it is necessary that we move forward in action with a strict adherence to a universal web of life view that puts the concern and life of all creatures at the center, and aims to "think out a connection between the universe and ethics" (*Civilization* 29).

The final piece of reverence for life ethics that must be considered is rational thought. For Schweitzer, rational thought is the starting point from which one recognizes that we all possess the will-to-live, which then weaves empathy and action with honor, and then promotes the will-to-live in all. Because of his belief in the power of rational thought, Schweitzer takes an original approach to ethics, declining to declare hard and fast rules for alleviating pain and suffering and for revering all life. Rather, Schweitzer creates an ideal that motivates action, and then encourages individuals to realize their own abilities and talents in working toward the ideal: "Schweitzer sustains a creative tension between mandatory high ideals and maximum individual freedom in interpreting and applying ideals**.** More than most ethicists, he trusts individuals to embody moral ideals in their lives in myriad ways" (Martin 99). This approach is beneficial because it does not set either limitations that stifle or bare minimums that people feel obligated to adhere to. According to Schweitzer, an absolute ethic "does not lay down specific rules for each possible situation. It simply tells us that we are responsible for the lives about us" (Meyer and Bergel 130). As a result, we become aware that we need to do something, and we are given the creative freedom to determine what it is we can do. By setting an ideal and encouraging rational thought, Schweitzer compels us to recognize that those who can help others should help others, both human and nonhuman, and to discover the ways in which we can help others. He says of

his ethics, “They demand from all that they devote a portion of their lives to their fellows. In what way and to what extent this is prescribed for him, the individual must gather from the thoughts which arise in him, and from the destinies among which his life moves” (*Civilization* 257). We will see in chapter three how Schweitzer’s ethics can be achieved.

CHAPTER 3

REVERENCE FOR LIFE ETHICS AND THE MODEL OF BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SANCTUARY

> None of us must allow to take place any suffering for which he himself is not responsible, if he can hinder it in any way. He must not soothe his conscience with the reflection that he would be mixing himself up in something which does not concern him. No one must shut his eyes and regard as non-existent the suffering of which he spares himself the sight. Let no one regard as light the burden of his responsibility. While so much ill-treatment of animals goes on, while the moans of thirsty animals in railway trucks sound unheard, while so much brutality prevails in our slaughterhouses, while animals have to suffer in our kitchens painful deaths from unskilled hands, while animals have to endure intolerable treatment from heartless people, or are left to the cruel play of children, we all share the guilt. (C&E 253)

Schweitzer, adhering to a web of life view of the universe in which all wills-to-live are of central concern, calls for the reverence of all life, which is an absolute ethic, universal in scope. It is "responsibility without limit towards all that lives" within a cohesive worldview that promotes interspecies kinship and devotion (*Civilization* 244). What Schweitzer's ethic demands is that human beings participate in "active engagement in alleviating and preventing suffering" in all creatures, (Martin 57) and that they "show to all will-to-live the same reverence as [they] do [their] own" (*Civilization* 242). Because we have flourished as a species with their help, and because of our dependence on them – as companions, as instruments, as resources, and as

ecologically necessary beings - and because we share them in the desire to live and enjoy life, we owe animals the same consideration as we do people. In this chapter, I will explore what it means to employ a reverence for life ethic through thought, empathy, and action, by using the model of Best Friends Animal Sanctuary.

In the early 1970s, a group of friends and animal lovers resolved to challenge the practice of euthanasia as a necessary evil in controlling the growing population of unwanted and unadoptable animals. Recognizing in other countries, such as Germany, that it was illegal to kill homeless animals, this group of friends knew their vision could become a reality in the United States through thought, cooperation and ingenuity (Glen 192). Thus they began a pilot program, rescuing animals whose time had run out in other shelters, rehabilitating them if needed, and then finding new homes for them. Those that were not found homes were given permanent homes with the friends, with no time limit on their stay (Best Friends "About"). Ten years later, realizing the success of their movement, Best Friends Animal Society was established and their Sanctuary in Kanab, Utah was created as a haven and a shelter of "last resort." It is here that animals, many of whom have been abandoned, abused and neglected, find compassionate human beings to care for them by rehabilitating them, both physically and psychologically, attending to their every need, and working with them to find a "forever home." The level of care, love and compassion given to each animal, no matter how big, small, or needy, parallels that which is given among human beings. The caregivers at the sanctuary know no limits to either the alleviation of pain and suffering, or for the promotion of comfort and enjoyment. From the design of the buildings that house many of the animals, to the meals prepared individually for each of the 2,000 animals that call the shelter home daily, rational thinking and empathy are the driving forces behind the success of this shelter. The sanctuary is the embodiment of reverence

for life ethics, and everything the society does, from hosting volunteers and guests, to educating the general population, is done to promote animal wellbeing. Their mission is “To lead a kindness revolution that transforms the way people relate to animals, nature and each other” (Best Friends “Vision”).

Best Friends Animal Sanctuary sits on a 33,000-acre ranch in Kanab, Utah. The canyon in which the ranch sits is known to the caregivers, volunteers, and fans of Best Friends as “Angel Canyon.” Within Angel Canyon there are homes for dogs, cats, horses, pigs, goats, burros, farm animals, “feathered friends,” rabbits, and, of course, the local wildlife. The housing for each group of animals has been carefully designed and thought out to reduce animal stress and to provide the maximum comfort and care to the animals who have typically been abandoned, abused and neglected, or have lost their “person.” To truly appreciate the ingenuity and pragmatism of the design at the sanctuary, it is best to explore Dogtown, a 90-acre community that houses over 500 dogs on any given day.

Dogtown is comprised of two areas: Old Dogtown and Dogtown Heights. Collectively they contain fourteen octagon-shaped dog houses, divided into groups of two, with dogs of similar temperament and age kept together in each group of houses. A special area on the edge of Dogtown, known as the “Lodges,” contains 15 smaller buildings designed for dogs with more complex behavioral issues who required much more “time and effort to help them work through those issues”(Best Friends “Lodge Dogs”). In addition to the octagon dog houses, there is a fitness center for dogs that require physical rehabilitation, and Tara’s Run, the Dogtown dog “school” where “homeless dogs can learn their manners in a fun, stimulating environment that helps them get ready for good new homes” (Best Friends “Dogtown”). In Dogtown, dogs do not live in cages, rather they are divided into “packs of friends,” each pack sharing a run within an

octagon and each run containing its "own indoor/outdoor home with plenty of running space, warm snuggly beds and lots of toys" (Best Friends "Dogs"). The dogs here "enjoy scenic views, sandy earth for digging, and the cool shade of trees. But most of all, they enjoy each other!" (Best Friends "Dogs"). Here, "Staff and volunteers know each dog's name, which bowl is for whom, and where each and every dog likes eating most" (Best Friends "Dogtown"). Of course, those dogs who do not live peaceably with other dogs are given their own space. Each building in Dogtown, with the exception of the Lodges, is octagon in shape. This design provides the maximum amount of visibility for caregivers from any focal point. Within the octagon are four indoor/outdoor runs, each housing one to four dogs, depending on the compatibility of each dog. With the exception of "The Clubhouse" dogs, who are still working on getting along well with other dogs, the dogs have the freedom to go outside and play, or relax inside their individual runs. The Clubhouse is home to dogs who do not get along well with others, many of whom were rescued from hurricane Katrina. The Clubhouse is comprised of two octagons named after two of the original Best Friends rescue dogs, Amra and Rhonda. Because of issues of aggression toward other dogs, the outside runs at Amra and Rhonda have been further divided to keep the dogs in their own spaces and protected from one another. While these dogs do not have as much running space and freedom to move indoors and outdoors on their own volition, the care that they receive is still above and beyond the typical care at any other shelter. The interior of Amra's octagon is filled with large dog crates and fluffy blankets that provide cozy sleeping quarters for the chilly nights. On the wall hangs the "daily instructions" for the care of the individual dogs; all dietary restrictions, supplement and medication instructions, as well as any special needs are noted there.

In the middle of the page are the instructions for Jude, a 12-year old black Lab mix who came to Best Friends after living at another shelter. For reasons unknown, Jude is completely

incontinent. Most shelters in the U.S. do not keep animals with such issues because they do not have the capacity to attend their special needs, and it is quite difficult to find permanent homes for them. In a normal situation, dogs like Jude would be euthanized, regardless of their mental wellbeing and capacity to enjoy life. But Best Friends adheres to a strict no-kill policy, which "means that animals are not destroyed except in cases of terminal and painful illness, when compassion demands euthanasia because there is no reasonable alternative" (Best Friends "About"). Here Jude's situation is not viewed as a burden on the caregivers, rather it is a fact of his life that must be dealt with, with the utmost care and respect. Four times a day Jude's bladder is expressed by his caregivers, and each expression is measured and tracked to ensure that his water intake is matching what is produced. Additionally, Jude is given a bath on his hindquarters twice a day, or more, if needed, to keep him clean and healthy. His caregiver keeps his friends and fans updated on his progress through the Best Friends website:

> He's been doing great! I have a soft spot for him. He's so willing to jump in our closet wash sink for his daily "squeezing" (more like 4 times a day). He burrows his head in between my legs and is so affectionate the whole time. He totally amazes me, when I look in his eye's he's always got the softest expression. I always say to him 'I know you didn't ask for this, but you handle it better than most.' (Best Friends "Jude")

This is the compassion and empathy that Schweitzer calls for. Jude is viewed as more than the sum of his disabilities. He is seen as a being who wills to live and desires enjoyment, and he should not be deprived of that because of a minor condition. Jude's caregivers value his life and his experience and thus will take care of his needs in perpetuity. Yet, for his sake and wellbeing,

they hope to find him a family “who will treat him with dignity and always be there to help him” (Best Friends “Jude”).

Other dogs at Amra have their own special needs, too. For example, many of the white bull terrier breeds tend to be sensitive to the sun, and while their individual runs provide them shade, the dogs enjoy lounging in the sun. Because of this, the caregivers apply sunscreen on the dogs’ stomachs, noses, ears, and other sensitive areas. Additionally, some dogs receive Benadryl for skin problems, some receive homeopathic formulas to help them relax, and all receive individual diets suited to their dietary needs.

Outside The Clubhouse, and outside of each group of octagons throughout Dogtown Heights and Old Dogtown, there is a walking path used to take the dogs for scenic walks through the canyon. These paths are unique, so they are worth mentioning. Each set of octagons has its own path for the safety of the dogs and those who walk the dogs. Since the dogs are grouped in octagons by temperament and age, it is important to keep the walking paths separate and to remain on the path designated for each housing group. For instance, since the dogs at Amra are dog aggressive, the caregivers and volunteers walking the dogs take special care not to come into contact with one another and to hide the dogs from each other while on the path in case two dogs are on the path at once. However, at The Garden, where the Jethro and Ginger octagons are located, the dogs get along better and there is less of a risk of dog aggression. The dog walkers, typically volunteers, are a little less “on guard” when walking along those paths, as are the dogs. Therefore, it is important to stay on each path designated for each set of octagons. Second, each path winds through the canyon and is about a quarter of a mile loop, which has been cleared and designated by large rocks placed individually by hand outlining the route. This is drastically

different from a typical shelter, which usually cannot keep dogs that do not get along with other dogs, and which provide, at best, one walking path for all the dogs.

The dogs at Best Friends who are dog aggressive, and even those who are people aggressive, are not destined to remain so forever. Each dog has his or her own training program, designed to work on his or her specific issues and needs. If a dog is housed at the Lodges, it most likely has aggressive tendencies toward dogs and people. For the time being, they are only to be handled by staff members. However, the staff members work with these dogs, first acclimating them to people. Once they have achieved that step, they are moved into one of the dog-aggressive octagons such as Amra or Rhonda. From here, their training plan continues, which includes walking with volunteers, special outings such as riding in the car to go into town or on an off-site hike, and even sleepovers with caregivers, volunteers and guests. The ultimate goal is to work with each dog in order to acclimate him or her to a variety of living situations, and to make him or her as adoptable as possible.

This is not a system that takes dogs "as is" and gives them a set number of days to get adopted from behind the door of a cage. Rather, it acknowledges the dogs for who they are and what they have experienced and aims to make the dogs' lives more enjoyable by addressing the fears and issues that cause bad behaviors: "We individualize their recovery by taking away the things that are troubling to them and adding things that they like and find comforting. We have to recognize what causes their stress from their past trauma and work with them," says Dr. Frank McMillan, the director of well-being studies at Best Friends (Best Friends "Lodge Dogs"). Consequently, by addressing the issues and by changing their behavioral patterns, the dog is given a greater opportunity to find a loving home. From the design of the octagons and walking paths, to addressing the special needs of each individual dog, rational thought and empathy

pervade Dogtown. The same thoughtfulness and care found at Dogtown is found throughout the sanctuary.

If the pragmatism of the design of Dogtown is impressive, the utter compassion for the cats at the Kitty Motel is astonishing. The Kitty Motel, one of the cathouses in the Cat World section of the sanctuary, houses many special needs cats (although most of the animals at the sanctuary are special needs). Upon entering the Kitty Motel, one is greeted by a menagerie of cats, each with its own fairly visible disability. There are two cats with completely paralyzed hind legs, two with cerebellar hypoplasia, one with her jaw wired shut, one with only one eye, and one with no hind legs. Despite their disabilities, these cats walk about proudly, existing happily and comfortably in the lobby – they are the "lobby cats." There are others hidden throughout the lobby, the kitchen, and in the warm laundry room, and once you have spent a few hours there your eyes can find them in their hiding spots. Sometimes you can catch glimpses of them scurrying across the room from food, to bed, to litter box. Some are skittish, and some, like Scooter, born without hind legs, will follow you around, demanding for you to pet them. In this particular cathouse, there are four rooms beyond the lobby: two that house the cats with the feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV), one that contains cats with very particular dietary needs, and one for grooming and veterinary purposes. Extended off of the rooms that house the cats are "catteries," open air, yet completely enclosed, cat playrooms with beams and cat trees for the cats to enjoy themselves. As in the doghouses, the cats in these rooms are able to move freely indoor and outdoor through a cat door in each room. Yet, because of their special needs and illnesses, the cats are kept separate both inside and outside. Going in and out of the rooms and lobby, the caregivers move about as they prepare meals, wash laundry, empty litter boxes, and disinfect every surface at least once a day in the Kitty Motel. With all the action, the house is

surprisingly quiet and serene. Nobody seems bothered that Scooter, born without hind legs, is unable to use the litter box; they simply clean up behind him as he moves along. Mouse and Dancer, two cats with the neurological disorder cerebellar hypoplasia sleep peacefully in their cat beds. Two other cats with paralyzed legs share a spot of sun in the middle of a piece of carpet placed on the floor. They are so content. Chewy, who recently had her jaw reconstructed, naps in the floor to ceiling, six-foot-wide stack of clean blankets and cat beds in the laundry room.

Chewy is recovering from surgery after being brought in by a couple from nearby St. George. The veterinarians assume that Chewy was hit by a car. When she came in, her face was swollen and she had a "very bad odor coming from her mouth" (Best Friend "Chewy"). She was given antibiotics for her infections and then received two surgeries to help repair her broken jaw. The veterinarian's chart on January 12, 2009 reads:

> To surgically repair the jaw I used wires to pull things back in place. On the maxilla this involved two wires – one along the right side encircling teeth in front of an behind the fracture; the other wire going from the right side to the left. For the mandible, one wire was in the center and encircled the big canines and pulled the mandibular symphysis back together. On the side of the mandible, I drilled two holes in the bone – one in front and one behind the fracture, and used wire to pull the pieces together. (Best Friends "Chewy")

Chewy's first surgery was not successful, and on January 21, 2009 another attempt was made:

> We made the decision to go back in and screw a plate into her lower jaw to provide better stability. The surgery went OK. It was difficult to get her jaw back into alignment (and it never went back into perfect alignment). About a week after surgery, her jaw had shifted again, but was stable and there was no more infection

> in her bone… Now her jaw is actually better aligned (not perfect, but should not be painful when it heals completely) and she is eating very well on her own (even some soft kibble). We removed her feeding tube and she continues to do well (although she can get in the way when I am working on my computer). (Best Friends "Chewy")

Chewy's story is not unusual at the Kitty Motel, or at the sanctuary. This is the standard concern and care each animal receives. To go from doghouse to cathouse, or to move from the pigs, who received daily exercise for weight control, to the horses, one of which has been outfitted with a prosthetic limb, you can see the concern and compassion for each life. It is compassion and care without limits. From January 21, 2009 to April 1, 2009, Chewy's progress was closely monitored, and by April 9, 2009 she was declared healthy and adoptable.

Dancer and Mouse, the two cats with cerebellar hypoplasia, live in the lobby of the Kitty Motel as well. This neurological disorder is found in cats whose mothers carried the panleukopenia virus, commonly referred to as distemper. Because of the effects it has on the brain, cats with cerebellar hypoplasia move in a very shaky, unbalanced, and exaggerated manner. They have difficulty controlling their movements, as their brains do not communicate effectively with their bodies. Watching them walk can be rather agonizing, as they can fall down many times during one trip. However, after spending time with these tenacious creatures (their condition never seems to deter them), it is easy to recognize that these cats are quite happy, as happy as any cat without the disease. Despite their shakiness, which can temporarily increase with excitement but does not become worse over time, their quality of life is incredibly high. They are amongst fellow cats and human beings who care deeply for them. They are hand-fed three times a day, and, they have a calm, peaceful place to call home. Down the road at the other

cathouses are kittens, older cats, blind cats, cats with deformed features, feral cats, many other cats with FIV and feline leukemia (FeLV), and even a cats who are prone to cancer and sensitive to the sun (these cats have a special shaded cattery all of their own). All of these cats, regardless of their conditions, are given the opportunity to live out their lives in peace and in comfort, and are given the utmost consideration for their wellbeing by their human caretakers.

Just as at Dogtown, the caregivers at the cathouses collectively know each of the 650 cats' names, their dietary needs, their likes and dislikes, their favorite toys, and their preferred type of bedding. They also know that most of these cats have such special needs that they will probably never find "forever homes" outside of the home they have at Best Friends. Yet the caregivers come to work every day to tend to these cats and their needs. Day in and day out they sweep, mop, wipe, launder, feed, empty litter boxes, administer medicine, and care for each individual cat. The same care is provided to the horses, the burros, the goats, farm animals the rabbits and the "feathered friends," and even the pigs – all 21 of them receive individually prepared meals (some like their Romaine chopped, some prefer it halved, and some even take antacids). The employees at Best Friends abide by their universal "golden rule" to "treat all living creatures as we ourselves would wish to be treated," and they maintain "compassion and respect for all living creatures," judging their "effectiveness by the extent to which animal lives are saved and improved, and by the positive experience of the people we touch," while leading "by example – developing, promoting and sharing great new ideas and programs to help animals" (Best Friends "Vision").

The work done at the sanctuary level is astounding. Yet, for the sake and wellbeing of animals worldwide, the Best Friends Animal Society continues their work well beyond the

canyon walls, working creatively with its members, fellow humane groups, and within communities to arrange spay and neuter, foster and adoption, and educational programs. Through this work, they are "helping to save and rehabilitate tens of thousands of animals each year" (Best Friends "About"). In addition to these programs, Best Friends has assembled a Rapid Response team that responds to animals in dire situations such as natural disasters, "extreme hoarding, and failed animal sanctuaries.[7] "With its sanctuary and rescue experience, Best Friends is the only organization in the country capable of mounting such major rescue efforts. (Best Friends "About")

Best Friends offers on-site education and workshops designed to promote animal wellbeing through educating animal owners and rescuers on behavior, handling, training, and long-term animal care. Moreover, recognizing that the majority of animals who end up in shelters are cats, bully breeds, the "results of exploitive breeders, including puppy mills," and owner-relinquished pets, Best Friends has focused their efforts on these issues, and Best Friends has created "community campaigns" to raise money and awareness in these areas, with the ultimate goal of reducing the euthanasia rate in the United States from 5 million to zero. Through these initiatives, and through their actions at the sanctuary, Best Friends demonstrates the value in animal life by serving the weak and working toward the alleviation of pain and suffering, and ending the needless killing of millions of animals each year.

[7] Best Friends Rapid Response team is most known for its response to hurricane Katrina in 2005, helping to rescue over 6,000 pets left behind in New Orleans, LA. In 2007, the Rapid Response team rescued 600 abandoned animals from a failed sanctuary in New York; 800 neglected, starving, and ill cats from a hoarding situation in Pahrump, NV; assisted authorities and humane groups in distributing food and supplies, and providing medical care for animals affected by flooding in Tabasco Mexico; and avoided mass euthanasia in Lima Peru by providing spay and neutering to over 500 animals, and administering over 6,500 vaccinations.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION: A REVERENCE FOR LIFE IS POSSIBLE

> Today it is thought to be going too far to declare that constant regard for everything that lives, down to the lowest manifestations of life, is a demand made by rational ethics. The time is coming, however, when people will be astonished that mankind needed so long a time to learn to regard thoughtless injury to life as incompatible with ethics.
>
> -Albert Schweitzer, Civilization and Ethics (244)

Animal advocacy often raises flags for those who do not value animal life and begs the question, "Why help animals and not human beings?" The answer is simple: It is animals *and* human beings that we need to serve and prevent from suffering and dying unnecessarily, not either /or. Neither Schweitzer nor process theologians promote animal life over human life. Rather, they include animal life along with human life in their consideration. However, even within the realm of animal advocacy and the web of life view, lines tend to be drawn as the demands of living ecologically and abiding by reverence for life are felt. It is one thing to call for a web of life view that considers all creatures' lives to be of importance, but to put it into practice and to abide by an ethic that includes nonhuman beings in our moral obligations is wholly different. Animal-inclusive ethics ultimately limit our behaviors, from food choices to clothing, while forcing us to rethink our attitudes toward human beings and nonhuman beings alike. For this reason, people feel the need to draw lines between which creatures we should honor and respect and which, for various reasons, can be forgotten. Finding where that line should be drawn has proven difficult.

For example, Birch and Cobb argue that, “All life has value but not all life is of equal value. Value is measured by richness of feeling and capacity for richness of feeling. There is a hierarchy of value from the simplest forms of life through to human beings corresponding to the richness of experience of each form of life” (205). Birch and Cobb use “richness of feeling” to measure value and thus create a hierarchy among beings. The problems with this are numerous, starting with the fact that hierarchies are contradictory to a web of life view. Moreover, we cannot possibly know how rich any other creature’s experience is except our own. We cannot even know from human to human how richness of experience may vary, a central problem in cases of human euthanasia. If we can determine the degrees of difference in experience between human beings, does that lead to us treating those human beings with less experience differently? We can remember, for example, a time in the history of our own country when African Americans were considered three-fifths of a person and subjected to cruelty with no rights and when those with disabilities and genetic illnesses, like Downs Syndrome, were, for example, deemed unable to vote. Such persons were “warehoused,” like animals are now, not rehabilitated and moved into mainstream society.

Additionally, its presupposition that richness of feeling as a valuable measurement is anthropocentric; because if human beings determine and claim that we have rich experiences then human beings must fall somewhere near the preferred end of the measurement. Furthermore, it gives human beings the power to determine the scale of richness of experience among nonhuman beings. Not only is this measure hierarchical and anthropocentric, it grants to human beings the power to determine, based on speculation and human created measures, who is more deserving of our consideration and who is not. But human beings beware! There are many ways to measure value, and the human species does not always come out favorably. In terms of

ecological value, human beings are, ironically, of the least valuable. *In Worldviews and Ecology*, David Ray Griffin explains,

> Those species whose (individual) members have the *least intrinsic value*, such as bacteria, worms, trees, and the plankton, have the *greatest ecological value*: without them, the whole ecosystem would collapse. By contrast, those species whose members have the greatest intrinsic value (meaning the riches experience and thereby the most value for themselves), such as whales, dolphins, and primates, have the *least ecological value*. In the case of human primates, in fact, the ecological value is negative: most of the other forms of life would be better off, and the ecosystem as a whole would not be threatened, if we did not exist. (203)

Attempting to measure value in terms of richness of experience contradicts a web of life view in which all creatures possess intrinsic value and are valuable to the web of life. Another option is to measure the capacity for suffering, however, that has its limitations as well.

Birch and Cobb, among many others, have also promoted the capacity to suffer as a means of measuring human responsibility to nonhuman beings in preventing and alleviating suffering. They believe that "there are degrees of the capacity to suffer and that it is much worse to inflict suffering on creatures with highly developed capacity to suffer than on those where this capacity is rudimentary" (158). Again, the problem here is our lack of knowledge that allows us to determine to what degree a creature suffers (it is also frightening to think how one would obtain that information). Furthermore, no creature that is able to suffer should suffer simply because human beings have drawn the line in front of it, rather than behind it. From an ecological standpoint, inflicting suffering on creatures with rudimentary capacities to suffer

could lead to greater suffering among large numbers of species, if those creatures have higher ecological value or higher ecological impact. Barsam states, “A limitation to Birch and Cobb’s ethics is that it binds unconscious life to yet another anthropocentric hierarchy and commits a similar error to that which they accuse others of with regard to animals. Their ethic of life is mainly for vertebrates (principally for mammals), and offers little moral concern to beings with decreasing complexity in their central nervous system or who lack one altogether” (135). To stay true to reverence for life ethics within a web of life view, we must focus intently on the goals of universally alleviating and preventing suffering, and revering other wills-to-live as we do our own. This must be the ideal we aim for in our daily lives and in our practice, and the only line that Schweitzer draws is at what is truly necessary.

In our daily lives, to alleviate and prevent suffering, we must first determine those creatures that *can* suffer, which would be creatures possessing a nervous system with the ability to process pain, not just react to external stimuli. In relation to reverence for life, it is our responsibility to keep these creatures from suffering and to revere their lives as much as possible, while coming to terms with the law of necessity. This means that in our daily actions we must be mindful of our negative impact on other creatures, and we must make choices based on harming the least amount of life and causing the least amount of suffering. Because of the laws of necessity, Schweitzer acknowledges that his ethic is an ideal and it is not achievable. Nevertheless, it must be aimed for. “Whenever I injure life of any sort, I must be quite clear whether it is necessary,” Schweitzer states, “beyond the unavoidable, I must never go, not even with what seems insignificant” (*Philosophy* 318).

Some may assume that the notion of “necessity” unravels Schweitzer’s argument, or is too loose of a determinant, but this is not so. As human beings, we know the difference between

necessity and luxury. Leather seats in a car, taken from the hide of an animal, which undoubtedly experienced great suffering, are not a necessity; neither is a leather purse, fur coat, or filet mignon once a week. Shoes made of leather that protect ones feet from disease and harmful elements could be considered a necessity, if there are no better options available. Since the shoes come at the cost of another life, we can use resignation with honesty to recognize that we did not reach the ideal. Practicing reverence, we are mindful of the life it cost to create our shoes. Schweitzer does not establish rules outside of necessity, and he asks each one of us to make honest decisions on a case-by-case basis: "[Man] makes distinctions only as each case comes before him, and under the pressure of necessity, as for example, when it falls to him to decide which of two lives he must sacrifice in order to preserve the other" (*My Life* 236). But we are to be honest with ourselves for the lives we take: "But all through this series of decisions he is conscious of acting on subjective grounds and arbitrarily, and knows that he bears responsibility for the life that is sacrificed" (236).

Occasionally consuming fish for protein and *essential* fatty acids that aid in brain function and that cannot be found elsewhere would fall into the category of necessity, as well. However, eating nonessential animal products to the extent that we do today, that create mass suffering for chickens, goats, pigs, and cows by the billions each year is not necessity; it is pure luxury. It is pure luxury at the cost of billions of lives, and great pain and suffering, and the trade-off is unjustifiable. Ultimately the onus is on the individual to decide the necessity of taking the life and the burden of having taken it. Each individual has "to decide for himself how far he can remain ethical and how far he must submit himself to the necessity for destruction of an injury to life, and therewith incur the guilt" (Philosophy 317). Schweitzer reminds us that we are guilty when choosing our own lives and wellbeing over the lives and wellbeing of others

(*Civilization* 206). However, if we are true to ourselves and establish what is in fact a necessity, and choose the necessary over the luxurious, we can, with good conscience, use resignation and relieve ourselves from permanent guilt. After all, we have made the argument that human beings are not separate from nature, but we are a part of nature. Therefore, striving for our own survival and our necessities, just as every other being strives, is our nature, too. Even though, as Schweitzer believes, "The world is a ghastly drama of will-to-live divided against itself" with creatures living at the cost of each other, we can look around to the other wills-to-live, our kin, and see them following the rule of necessity, and we must follow suit (*Civilization* 245).

Beyond the daily negotiations of life and the laws of necessity, Schweitzer encourages purposeful action to help promote the alleviation of pain and suffering, and the reverence of all life. Again, rather than assigning specific tasks and rules to follow, Schweitzer believes that through contemplation each individual can determine his or her own means of contributing to the good. Schweitzer calls these "projects of love," in which people "devote a portion of their lives to their fellows. In what way and to what extent this is prescribed for him, the individual must gather from the thoughts which arise in him, and from the destinies among which his life moves" (*Civilization* 257). There is no better demonstration of this than at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. The thoughtfulness and planning that ensures each life has been considered to the fullest extent and the many volunteers and staff members who contribute their individual skills and expertise collectively make a significant impact on animal life. Schweitzer stresses that we all must do our part: "I have never tried to withdraw myself from this community of suffering. It seemed to me a matter of course that we should all take our share of the burden of pain that lies upon the world" (*My Life* 242). From the Christian perspective, when Christians extend the care to animals that they do to human beings, they are extending Jesus' command to love. "What you

have done to one of the least of these, you have done to me" Schweitzer reminds us that this "is valid for us all, and it ought to determine what we do also to the least among living creatures" (*Revelations* 32).

It is neither because human beings are superior to nature, nor because they are "closer to God" than other beings, that they are obligated to regard animals in their moral consideration. It is because human beings possess reason (that is not to say other creatures do not possess reason) and have the *means* of acting in the world to create a more positive life experience for others that they must do so. However, it is not until we recognize that our assumption of nature as separate from humanity is inaccurate and baseless, that we can see how our individual and collective actions, while seeming negligible, have a tremendous impact on life beyond ourselves.

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