

Animals Care Ethics and Development in Africa

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to show that human beings have duties (directly or indirectly) to animals. Animals occupy a prominent place in human culture and history. Animals have featured in the thinking of some philosophers and others from earliest times. But with the birth of the environmental movements and ethics, there is a heightened thinking about animals. Many groups and persons have proposed things like animal rights, animal liberation, moral status for animals, animal welfare, and so forth. The paper is of the view that all the issues involved in the animal debate cannot be featured here. The central concern is in affirming that animals should be cared for and that caring for animals contributes to development. Development is defined here not simply in terms of economic and physical development but also as whatever brings about the wellbeing and welfare of human beings. The paper uses a critical analytic method to show that philosophical viewpoints on animals favour animal care. Human beings have a duty to respect and care for animals. The paper finds and concludes that ethical behaviours toward animals should care for and protect them from harm and pain. The needs and interests of animals do not have to trump over the genuine needs of human beings.

Introduction

It should be noted right away that this paper does not in any way imply that non-human animals (for short animals) are equal to human beings. It is also not implied that human beings have no right to make prudent use of animals for their own development and wellbeing. Animals are related to human beings in one way or the other and they have been part of human history and civilisation from the beginning of time. From a utility perspective without animals it is doubtful if humans would have advanced to what they are now. Humans have a responsibility to animals even if those responsibilities are conceived to be indirect responsibilities. The United Nations (1972) in her declaration on human environment

enunciates that: “Man has a special responsibility to safeguard and wisely manage the heritage of wildlife and its habitat, which are now gravely imperilled by a combination of adverse factors. Nature conservation, including wildlife, must therefore receive importance in planning for economic development.”

The concern of this paper is not with animal rights as such. That is an issue that is beyond the scope of this present paper. Animals are part of human life and identity whether they are domestic or wild. Animals feature prominently in folklores, folktales and traditional stories of many indigenous cultures. Animals are part of human life even in urban cities, in industries, factories, etc. There is no way then that a discussion of animals with regard to how human beings relate to them can be useless or unnecessary. Even before the rise of the contemporary environmental ethics in the 1960s, animals feature prominently or occasionally in philosophic, literary, and socio-cultural writings of humanity.

In development policies and planning in Africa, the idea of animal ethics is often not mainstreamed. It is left at the backburner as if care and protection of animals and preventing them from unnecessary suffering and pain are not important. The aim of this paper is to assert that a concern for the welfare and wellbeing of animals should be an important aspect of development in Africa. The paper will carry out its aim by making some conceptual analysis. After that have been done, the paper will present some philosophical viewpoints regarding concern for animals. The paper will also examine the situation of development in Africa. The developmental problems and predicaments in Africa are enormous. No one solution can be a panacea to all the myriads of problems in Africa. Better ethical treatment of animals is not a panacea to all the developmental problems in Africa. But it can at least in one way make human beings better and compassionate, contribute to their health and wellbeing thus enhancing them as better agents of development. Development is about people just as security is about people. Those people need to live in a sustainable environment to enjoy those development especially future generations. Conservation of the environment or nature is incomplete without conservation and caring for animals for animals are an intrinsic part of the environment. If animals

were to be removed from the environment, the ecosystem will suffer from imbalance and this will invariably affect human health.

Conceptual Analysis

Animal ethics is a subset of environmental philosophy and ethics. The relationship or link between animals ethics and environmental philosophy, according to Aaltola (2009) can be contentious for while animals ethics is dealing with the value of individual animals, environmental ethics deals with holistic concerns of the entire realities in the environment. As most often understood ethics deal with the study of right and wrong human behaviours. It deals with the issue of what makes some actions wrong and what makes some other actions rights. The issues of how human beings relate and behave towards animals all form part of animal ethics. Human behaviour towards animals matter for it shows whether human are humane or inhumane. Animal ethics is a very wide field that can be studied from various dimensions. The paper will love to limit itself to animal care ethics. It is a basic minimum that many philosophers, moral thinkers and political theorists will agree to the minimum that animals deserve to be cared for and protected. The issue of whether they have rights, and share in egalitarianism with human beings are not within the purview of this paper. It is understood in research that not every issue can be examined.

There are various meanings of development. All of them cannot be exhausted here. According to Sen (2008), development in terms of freedoms deals with the actualization of people's potentials. Barder (2012) cites Amartya Sen who opines that development is not just change in people's economic income but it has to do equally with their capabilities, choices, and freedoms. For Barder (2012), "it also conveys something about the capacity of economic, political and social systems to provide the circumstances for that well-being on a sustainable, long-term basis." Ayayi (1999) is of the opinion that "Development is growth plus change. Change in turn is social, cultural as well as economic" (p. 15). Ayayi (1999) also notes that the welfare of people is the concern of development. There are no ways that all the dimensions of development can be defined here. There are religious, spiritual, economic, human, cultural, sociological and so forth dimensions to development. Development is not simply a destination. It is a process. It

is the process of the improvement of the lives of a people. In his theory of development, Ake (1996) is highly critical of imperialism, corrupt leaders and opines that only when the people participate in taking decisions affecting them will development occur. It suffices to note here that the term is used here in terms of improvement and elevation of the wellbeing of people. Development in Africa implies all that enhances the improvement of the lives of African people and enables them to enjoy the good and optimal life of peace and security which is the purpose of government. Omoregbe (2005) rightly notes that there are various aspects of development but the moral development of human personality is the most important for without it economic development, political development, and development of physical infrastructure in a nation will be eaten up by corruption and the decadent lives of the people. The American Declaration of Independence says that the cardinal inalienable rights that humans are entitled to are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (US Congress 1776). Whatever enhances human life and dignity, liberty and freedoms, joy and happiness whether in the realm of politics, social life, religious endeavours, and cultural life are all part of the development process.

With the conceptual clarification done, it is imperative to do a brief overview of development in Africa, before examining some philosophical views on animals.

Brief Overview of the State of Development in Africa

The emphasis in this section is not to dwell on one particular aspects of development and focus on it all through. The goal is to highlight some various aspects of development in the continent. There will just be an overview of some few countries and some issues affecting the continent they are signs of underdevelopment. Keep in mind here that development was understood to imply all the processes and actions that enhance human wellbeing in their pursuit of happiness, life, and liberty. While it is true that there are some happy people in Africa, some Africans are equally sad and living in state of suffering and pain.

In terms of political development, most African countries are grossly underdeveloped. Most African countries claim to be operating democratic systems of government. But when you examine them critically they are far from democratic. Democracy is not just periodic

elections but allowing the people to participate in governance through providing the dividends of democracy and the good life. In a country like Cameroon, Paul Biya has been in power for more than three decades. The political development of the country is stunted and there is massive oppression of the opposition and dissenting views. In terms of social life the country has been experiencing warfare and violence for many months now and hundreds of people have been killed. Like most other country there is massive decadent infrastructure.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been bedevilled by war and violence since her independence. Presently Joseph Kabila has been in power for many years and he has postponed elections a number of times. He like some other African leaders is a sit-tight dictator. Thousands of people have been killed in the DRC. There is continuous warfare over the resources of the DRC. Countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone have in time past experienced resource wars that led to massive destruction of human lives and properties.

Dehumanising poverty that makes people sad is rampart in the African continent. The price of many basic products such as rice, yam, garri, oil, etc has gone up in Nigeria. Yet at the same time there is no equivalent rise in income. Recently the Nigeria Labour Congress went on strike to argue for a higher minimum wage. Nigeria is suffering from decadent social infrastructure. The state of Nigerian roads is nothing to write home about. Insecurity is rampart in Nigeria. Boko Haram, Niger Delta Militants have killed many. There is constant kidnapping in the land. The news is Africa is inundated with African migrants who are travelling through the Sahara Desert and attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to get to Europe because of poverty and many other problems in Africa. Thousands of African has died in the Mediterranean Sea.

The state of corruption in the continent is troubling. There is hardly any African country that is free from corruption and embezzlement of public fund. Transparency International (2015) says: “Nearly 75 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa are estimated to have paid a bribe in the past year – some to escape punishment by the police or courts, but many forced to pay to get access to the basic services that they desperately need.”

In much of Africa, life is short, and nasty, to paraphrase Hobbes. African children die daily of diseases such as malaria, measles, chicken pox, etc that they should not die of. Many hospitals in Africa are simply glorified clinics. Thousands of African doctors who should treat African live in the western world. There are many hospitals with no medicine and drugs. Clausen (2015) cites Abayomi Ajayi, an obstetrician and gynaecologist who says: “Access is still the greatest challenge to health care delivery in Africa. Fewer than 50% of Africans have access to modern health facilities. Many African countries spend less than 10% of their GDP on health care. Also, there is a shortage of trained health care professionals from Africa because many of them prefer to live and work in places like the U.S. and Europe.” To say that Africans are suffering in terms of health care is understatement.

As this paper notes, animal care and health invariably enables humans to have healthier animal meat, and thus preventing them from diseases. When they are saved from diseases, resources that would have been used in treatment of sick human beings can be put to the philosophical moral consideration for caring for animals; there are pragmatic reasons to care for animals.

Some Philosophical Viewpoints on Animal Care

Philosophers and political theorists have offered various positions on animals. Wilson (2018) has shown that thinking philosophically about animals often falls into three broad categories. These categories are the indirect theories, the direct but unequal theories, and the morally equal theories. Explaining each of these Wilson (2018) says the indirect theory sees animals as not equal to human beings and no moral status. This theory affirms this because it is argued here that animals lack consciousness, rationality and autonomous activity. But animals should be protected from harm as harming them can affect human beings. For Aristotle there is natural hierarchy of living beings. Animals lack reasoning capacity and cannot direct their actions as they act by instincts. Animals for Aristotle exist to serve human beings. The medieval philosopher, Thomas Aquinas is of the opinion that only human beings are rational and can direct their actions to a purposeful end, which is eternity. Animals exist to serve human beings. For Kant (1956) being autonomous is necessary for a thing to count in moral consideration and

having ability to will. Only good will has intrinsic value according to him. For Descartes animals are not conscious and cannot meditate or think. These viewpoints of Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant and Descartes can be found in Cochrane (2010).

With regard to the second theory, Wilson (2018) says: animals have some moral status but they are not equal to human beings. This is so because animals lack the ability for moral reciprocity. But they should be protected as they are sentient. When there are conflicts between animal and human interests that of human beings should come first, says Wilson (2018).

The third category of theory avers that animals are morally equal to humans and have rights since they have like physiological make-up as humans; and they equally have mental capacities at least like children and disabled persons (Wilson 2018). Wilson (2018) notes that Peter Singer and Tom Regan belongs to this school of thought. The point is that, children and disabled persons do not have full mental capacities as healthy adults yet their humanity or entitlement to some fundamental rights are not denied. Singer sees animals as morally equal to human beings and argues for equal consideration of interests. Animals according to him have interests also. Regan (1983) argues that any being that is a subject of life deserves moral consideration and should not be treated as a means. This implies for him that animals should not be use as food or medicine.

One common denominator to all the theories is that they at least accord some form of respect and care for nonhuman animals. The concern of this paper is rooted in that fact. Animals should be cared for and protected. The paper thinks that there is no need for animal theorists to fight themselves. There should be room for environmental pragmatism and even pluralism when it comes to the status of animals.

Developmental Consequences of Un(ethical) Behaviour towards Animals

On a surface look there may seem to be no link between development in Africa and care for animals. Does caring for animals help to enhance development? When development is defined in a limited manner such as physical development, the link may be very thin. But when development is seen broadly and rightly as the welfare and wellbeing of people, then

animal care is an imperative. As this section will reveal caring for animals enhance human health and wellbeing. Animals provide economic resources to build projects, provide ecosystemic values, and much more. Development is about people and what affects people affects development. What harms the wellbeing of people is morally unacceptable. Wilson (2018) rightly notes that even for those who believe that animals are not equal to human beings; they believe that animals should be protected. Wilson (2018) notes that the argument goes thus: "I cannot harm your pets because they belong to you, and by harming them I will thereby harm you. I also cannot harm animals in public simply for fun since doing so will upset many people, and I have a duty to not cause people undue distress."

When some persons show no concern for animals, it can have a great deal of consequences for development in Africa. As noted previously this paper does not in any way imply that humans cannot make lawful use of animals either as food or in medicine, etc. Think for instance of domestic animals that have accompanied humans for hundreds of years. Owner of domestic animals find those animals useful, find pleasure in them, have some as their aid and help, and many other benefits that are derived from domestic animals. It is the case that owners of domestic animals such as dogs, cats, etc feel angry and aggrieved when their domestic animals are maltreated, harmed or allowed to suffer. If the owner of a domestic animal feels aggrieved when his/her domestic animal is maltreated by a neighbour, invariably it will also be wrong when it is the owner that puts his/her own domestic animals through pain and suffering. Conflicts do arise among humans over maltreatment of animals. Those conflicts do have consequences for the human health and wellbeing. Owners of pets in some cases have sued their neighbour to court over the maltreatment of their pet animals. In the United States, the Michigan State University College of Law (2018) has a list of many people who have been found guilty of cruelty to animals. All these cases have economic implications. They cost money and have toil on human health. The money spent on these cases could be spent on developmental projects and other things vital to human beings. It will be wrong to think that maltreatment of animals have no link to economic development.

Unethical behaviours towards animals such as beating and flogging of animals, torture of animals, depriving animals of food and water, and overburdening animals with work tend to make human beings inhumane, uncompassionate, and even become insensitive to human suffering. Researchers have indicated that those who are violent to animals are likely to be violent to fellow human beings. Hodges (2008) citing various sources indicate thus:

- 100% of sexual homicide offenders examined had a history of cruelty towards animals.
- 70% of all animal abusers have committed at least one other criminal offense and almost 40% have committed violent crimes against people.
- 63.3% of men who had committed crimes of aggression admitted to cruelty to animals.
- 48% of rapists and 30% of child molesters reported committing animal abuse during childhood or adolescence.
- 36% of assaultive women reported cruelty to animals while 0% of non-assaultive women did.
- 25% of violent, incarcerated men reported higher rates of “substantial cruelty to animals” in childhood than a comparison group of non-incarcerated men (0%).
- Men who abused animals were five times more likely to have been arrested for violence towards humans, four times more likely to have committed property crimes, and three times more likely to have records for drug and disorderly conduct offenses.

World Animal Net (2018) rightly notes that:

Development will not be balanced or sustainable if important aspects such as animal well-being, and human-animal relationships, are not included in development programmes. There are a myriad of reasons why no country’s development should take place without giving full consideration to the situation and welfare needs of our fellow sentient animals. These reasons cover a range of different issues, including: ethical concerns, human and animal health, poverty reduction; agriculture/ livestock/ fisheries and rural development; sustainable livelihoods;

health/safety (including food safety and security); biodiversity/environment; and disaster/ emergency response work.

Take for instance many of the animals such as cows, fishes, etc that humans depend on for food and medicine. If people lack respect for animals even from an anthropocentric basis, then they can poison, maltreat, and make those animals to suffer. When animals on which humans depend for food and medicine are not well treated, they become sickly and weak and can bring sickness to humans when they are consumed. While it is beneficial to ecosystem for animals to be treated humanely, it is also beneficial to humans who benefit from the goods of those animals. Animals kept in game reserves, zoos, and parks bring delight and pleasure to humans who are tourist to those places. Thus they enhance human mental health and wellbeing. Even animals kept in zoos, parks, and game reserves have to be kept humanely and cared for. It is unethical to maltreat animals in parks and zoos. It is true that there is a debate among environmental philosophers on the morality of keeping animals in zoos, parks or domesticating them. That debate shall not be entered into here. It suffices to note that for this present paper, in as far as animals are not maltreated in zoos and parks, it is acceptable. World Animal Net (2015)

Wildlife has a value beyond price. It is a natural spectacle which enriches lives and spirits. It is also the bedrock of an international tourist industry. Yet wildlife is subjected to increased commercial exploitation, which is decimating wildlife numbers. This will have a massive impact, especially in Africa, in terms of the quality of life, as well as economically. At the same time, wildlife habitats have been increasingly degraded - through agricultural practices, deforestation and the opening up of hitherto inaccessible areas. It is essential that development work not only takes into account wildlife impacts, but also directly assists with wildlife and habitat governance programmes. (p3)

It is true that human beings have a right to development. The right to development is mitigated by the right to a healthy and safe environment. Developmental projects and infrastructure need to be mindful of the habitat of nonhuman animals and the ecosystem.

Hodges (2018) citing *Animal Abuse and Human Abuse: Partners in Crime and Animal Abuse and Violent Offending* asserts that: “Communities must acknowledge that the abuse of *any* living being is unacceptable and endangers *everyone*. Recognizing that cruelty to animals is a significant form of aggressive and antisocial behaviour may help further the understanding and prevention of violence. “Animals are entitled to protection and care though not at the expense of genuine and real human needs. World Animal Net (2015)

Science has now confirmed that the non-human animals who share our planet (and sometimes our lives) are sentient beings who share with us consciousness, feelings, perceptions – and the ability to experience pain, suffering and states of wellbeing. Also, that they have biologically-determined natures, instincts and needs which are important to them. This underlines the need to acknowledge each individual animal’s intrinsic value; and the fact that each is worthy of our respect and care. iii Thus there is a clear ethical responsibility to ensure the welfare of animals. (p. 2).

It is important to note that human greed and avarice are not included in human needs. There are people who wantonly destroy forest and wildlife just to obtain endangered animals parts for sale in illegal sales that have been banned by the international community. There are people who enter into indigenous lands in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, and Kenya; and kill animals without taking the interests of those local communities into consideration.

It is accepted that animals provide a lot of services to humans. According to the World Animal Net (2015) “Numerous studies indicate that companion animal ownership is associated with a range of physical, psychological and social health advantages” (p.3). Animals do suffer from diseases such as rabies, animal pox, etc. Investing economic resources to

protect animals and giving them veterinary care are crucial public health issues. Since these animals contribute to the wellbeing of humans, it is an issue crucial to human, economic, and social development. World Animal Net (2015) says: “Taking care of animal health and welfare can provide human health benefits which in turn would lead to a more sustainable and productive economy, as well as improved quality of life.” (p.4). To think that animal care and welfare is not a development issue will be to think in the wrong.

The paper can go on and on enumerating the pragmatic benefits of animal care to humans and the ecosystem. The few points enumerated above are enough.

Concluding Reflections

The fundamental point that this paper affirms is that human beings have duties to care for and protect animals. If not for anything, at least for anthropocentric reasons it is for the greater benefits of human beings. The behaviour of human beings towards animals matter. There is need for a strong animal care ethics. To be human is to be humane. It is a sign of humanity for humans to show humanness towards animals and the entire environment. The discussion on animal care ethics is relevant to development in Africa. When animals are cared for and protected it have all round benefits for economic growth, human health and wellbeing, ecosystemic values, etc. Finally, the paper concludes that there is need to mainstream animal care ethics into developmental process in Africa.

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