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USING ANIMALS FOR EDUCATION
AND ENTERTAINMENT. ATTEMPT
AT THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL ASSESSMENT

Abstract. The article seeks to evaluate the use of animals for educational and entertainment purposes in terms of theology and morality. After a synthetic presentation of the multifaceted concept of animal rights, an attempt is made to formulate, in an analogical way, an evaluation of the selected forms of using animals: from establishing zoological parks and organizing sports competitions to fights involving animals. Among those animal uses, the most serious objections are made to animal fights among animals themselves or against men, as they cause the suffering of living creatures that cannot be justified by a mere wish to provide entertainment for a specific social group.

Key words: animals; animal fights; animal rights; moral theology; zoological parks.

Animals have accompanied man since the beginning of his existence. Man has used animals to achieve different goals and to satisfy his needs. He has bred or hunted them in order to get meat and skin. In addition to this basic form of using animals, with time there appeared other forms which have become important in the recent years. Scientists conduct numerous studies and experiments on animals which contribute to the progress in the field of anatomical and physiological knowledge and to numerous practical benefits.

Animals are used for educational and entertainment purposes on a slightly smaller scale. Zoological parks are established to house wild animals, sports competitions are organized, in which animals are an indispensable or even a prime participant. Finally, there are fights with their participation. Their opponent can be man or other animals.

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Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “God entrusted animals to the stewardship of those whom he created in his own image. Hence it is legitimate to use animals for food and clothing. They may be domesticated to help man in his work and leisure.”¹ It seems necessary, however, to set boundaries which man should not cross. This article aims to make a theological and moral analysis of the use of animals for educational and entertainment purposes. The following activities will be evaluated: running zoological parks as well as organizing sports competitions and fights with the participation of animals. The problem is all the more valid because public opinion is strongly polarized in this matter. There are people who recognize the possibility of unlimited use of animals by man to realize his goals. There are also strong philoanimalist organizations which in their tasks demand the restoration of freedom for all animals that do not live in the wild. They sometimes make unlawful attempts to liberate them from laboratories, circuses and zoological parks.²

1. LIMITS TO USING ANIMALS BY MAN

Selective reading of the Scripture sometimes leads to a conclusion that man has absolute authority over animals and therefore there are no restrictions to their use. However, this is not a legitimate claim, for it is contradictory to the comprehensive vision contained primarily in the inspired books of the Old Testament.³ For this reason, moral theologians are trying to determine the boundaries of all forms of human interference in the world of nature.

The classics of moral theology, representing both the Alphonsian and neo-Thomistic tendencies, indicated that all forms of animal use must be in accordance with reason, and their purpose must be decent. That is why man cannot be guided by a whim. Undertaking this type of activity [using animals] must be always accompanied by a sufficient reason.⁴

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2002), No. 2417 (hereinafter CCC).

² W. PATON, *Człowiek i mysz. Badania medyczne na zwierzętach* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1997), 250.

³ J. WRÓBEL, “Zwierzęta i ich prawa,” *Prawa człowieka. W 60. rocznicę uchwalenia Powszechnej Deklaracji Praw Człowieka. Przesłanie moralne Kościoła*, ed. K. Jeżyna, T. Zadykiewicz (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010), 80–81.

⁴ H. NOLDIN, *Summa theologiae moralis*, vol. II: *De praeceptis* (Insbruck: Verlag Felizian Rauch, 1955), 318; B.H. MERKELBACH, *Summa theologiae moralis ad mentem D. Thomae et ad*

Contemporary moral theologians go much further in their postulates, formulating obligations for man towards animals. They sometimes call them animal rights in an analogous manner, because their source is the very nature of living beings. Animal rights cover three dimensions. First of them is the duty to respect the work of the Creator, which is good. God's relationship with the created world has pedagogical character for man.⁵

The second level contains the obligation to respect animals and their nature. It follows that killing an animal or exploiting it is only fair if it is motivated by existential necessity or other serious reasons. The opposite activity is deeply immoral, because it is not in accordance with the law of nature.⁶

The last dimension refers to the sensitivity and kindness towards animals and to values relevant to their nature and existence. It should be noted that especially higher animals have the ability to feel pain which cannot be inflicted by man to any other being. However, animals do not have the ability to make sense and experience in an individual perspective. Hence, inflicting pain is always an objective evil that cannot be directed or interpreted.⁷

Consequently, while making theological and moral evaluation of animal use its goal should be considered above all. It is also necessary to take into account whether the way animals are used is simply incompatible with the nature of living beings. No less important is the statement whether their use does not cause disproportionate pain or stress. Based on these premises some forms of human activity will be analysed below.

2. SOME FORMS OF USING ANIMALS FOR EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Educational and entertainment purposes are realised by man in various ways. In some of them, animals play a significant role. Therefore, in the context of the above premises, it is now time to evaluate validity of establishing

normam iuris novi, vol. II: *De virtutibus moralibus* (Brugis: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959), 376; K. SMYKOWSKI, "Zwierzęta jako przedmiot przedsoborowej myśli teologicznomoralnej," *Studia Bydgoskie* 8 (2014): 82.

⁵ J. WRÓBEL, "Zwierzęta i ich prawa," 96; S. CALDECOTT, "Prawa zwierząt," *Communio* (Polish edition) 12 (1992), 6: 97–102.

⁶ J. WRÓBEL, "Zwierzęta i ich prawa," 101.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 102–103.

and running zoological parks and organizing sport competitions and fights with the participation of animals.

a) Zoological gardens

The first zoological gardens were created around 2500 BC in Egypt. The Pharaohs kept in them wild animals which were acquired during numerous wars. They were a symbol of wealth and political power.⁸ Later, zoological parks were created for scientific purposes. These entailed using animals to study the activities of the organism and were carried out on a large scale at the Alexandria school. The school's development took place at the turn of the 3rd century BC and was connected with the consent and support of King Ptolemy I.⁹

Beginnings of contemporary urban zoological parks, available to a wide public, fall on the 19th century. The first such zoo was established in London in 1828. Currently, there are over 400 large zoological gardens and wild animal parks in the world. In Poland alone, there are 15 zoos that are run by local government units. In recent years, numerous private animal parks have been created, such as seal aquariums or oceanariums, which attract a large group of visitors. Institutions of this kind are a popular form of spending free time. According to statistical surveys carried out in the United States, zoological gardens in the US are visited by about 100 million tourists annually. Almost one third of the population visited one garden in the last year, and over 98% went to a zoo at least once in a lifetime.¹⁰

Opponents of the existence of zoological gardens, associated in radical philoanimalist organizations, raise a number of objections to the existence of such institutions. They indicate that the animals have the right to live in their natural environment. They emphasize that in captivity animals are exposed to physical and mental suffering, whose main source are improper living conditions (too small space, inadequate temperature or air humidity), transport between zoological parks and medical–veterinary treatments.¹¹

In order to respond to these objections, one must first characterize the objectives pursued by zoological parks. As it has already been signaled, one

⁸ J. DUNLAP, S.R. KELLERT, "Zoo e parchi zoologici," in *Fondamenti di bioetica animale*, ed. G. Russo (Torino: Elledici, 2007), 138.

⁹ W. SZUMOWSKI, *Historia medycyny filozoficznie ujęta* (Kęty: Wydawnictwo Marek Derewiecki, 2008), 100.

¹⁰ J. DUNLAP, S.R. KELLERT, "Zoo e parchi zoologici," 138; *Ogrody zoologiczne i parki zwierząt*, ed. B. Boruc, P. Zalewski (Warszawa: De Agostini, 2011), 4.

¹¹ J. DUNLAP, S.R. KELLERT, "Zoo e parchi zoologici," 139.

of the decisive factors determining the ethical qualification of animal use is the purpose.

Contemporary zoological gardens perform at least four functions. Historically speaking, the first function is to provide entertainment. Studies conducted among the visitors to these institutions indicate that the main motive of visits is to spend free time with family or friends. According to the opponents of placing animals in gardens and parks, it is too trivial reason for depriving animals of their freedom. These reservations are even more serious when such a situation concerns rare animals or ones threatened with extinction. The reason for their use is the desire to increase the number of tourists, and thus also to boost profits from selling tickets¹². It would be possible to agree with these allegations made by members of pro-animal organizations and by a large part of the public if it were not for the fact that providing entertainment is currently not the only purpose of this kind of institutions. Such a view is most often the result of ignorance in terms of their functioning.

The ludic function overlaps with education. At present, more and more people live in cities. Thus, they lose any real contact with wild animals. Many zoological gardens in their structure have departments of didactics that deal with various forms of formal and informal education. This education is carried out both by employees themselves and by NGOs cooperating with zoos. Many programs serving this purpose are addressed to people of different ages and cognitive abilities. The tools used in education include, among others, educational boards, leaflets, collections, explanation boards or information bulletins. Moreover, lectures are organised. Their task is to transfer knowledge in the field of zoology and shape ecological awareness and attitudes in society¹³.

Contemporary zoological gardens are also an important element of scientific structures. It is in zoological parks that numerous research and experiments are carried out, whose aim is both to understand the anatomy, physiology and behavior of wild animals, and to achieve practical benefits related to the improvement or development of new methods of their breeding. It should be noted, however, that zoological studies carried out in zoos are focused primarily on experiments in the field of animal science or behavioral

¹² Ibidem, 141.

¹³ ŚWIATOWE STOWARZYSZENIE OGRODÓW ZOOLOGICZNYCH I AKWARIÓW, *Tworzenie przyszłości dla dzikiej przyrody. Strategia ochrony ogrodów zoologicznych i akwariów* (Berno: Biuro Wykonawcze WAZA, 2005), 12, 54.

observation. They are characterized by low degree of invasiveness, and the possible pain or stress is associated with catching and immobilizing animals¹⁴. Such tests do not give rise to serious ethical objections. They do not cause pain to animals, the inflicting of which, without a proportionate reason, is contrary to human dignity¹⁵. The necessary proportion is also maintained between the expected cognitive or practical effects and the inconvenience to which the animal is exposed¹⁶. In principle, this does not make the extremely restrictive law that regulates the issue of experiments on animals require even the necessity of obtaining additional consent for conducting such research¹⁷.

Moreover, zoological gardens play an important role in the protection of animal species. It should be noted that some species threatened with extinction only survived in this type of institution. This situation applies to the Siberian tiger, whose population in the zoological parks is several times larger than in the wilderness, and to the milu deer (Pere David's deer) that does not occur in natural habitat. It is postulated that at the beginning of the 21st century, zoological gardens should become more and more of conservation centers, and the animals should be exhibited in their environmental and zoo-geographical arrangements¹⁸.

Ecological reflection provides more reasons to claim that passive species protection (system of prohibitions, creation of protected areas, sustainable development policy) is currently insufficient. Therefore, it seems necessary to resort to active protection methods. Among them, an important role is played by animal breeding *ex situ* (outside the natural place of existence), whose privileged place are precisely zoological gardens. Such breeding involves close cooperation between individual institutions, which makes it possible to preserve the genetic diversity important for the healthy condition of the subsequent generations of animals. Reaching the appropriate population size *ex situ* enables the commencement of the trans-location of individual specimens or groups to natural conditions by means of settling or

¹⁴ S. MROCZKOWSKI, "Cierpienie zwierząt doświadczalnych," *Przegląd Hodowlany* 77 (2009), 1: 1–3.

¹⁵ CCC, No. 2418; FRANCIS, Encyclical *Laudato si'* (Watykan, 2015), no. 130 (hereinafter LS).

¹⁶ K. SMYKOWSKI, "The Possibility of Conducting Experiments on Animals. Moral Theologian's Reflections," *Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae* 13 (2015), 2 : 114–115.

¹⁷ Directive 2010/63 / EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes, *Official Journal of the European Union* L 276/33 (2010), 39.

¹⁸ G. GABRYŚ, "Rola ogrodów zoologicznych w ochronie gatunkowej zwierząt," *Przegląd Przyrodniczy* 11 (2000), 2–3: 200–201.

reintroduction (introducing species to the areas that were once the place of their existence). Such actions do not always succeed, which is related to the existence of various kinds of conditioning. However, they are a real form of commitment to counteract extermination of species threatened by extinction.¹⁹ It should be noted that in this way man follows his vocation to “communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble ‘master’ and ‘guardian,’ and not as a heedless ‘exploiter.’”²⁰ It is also a manifestation of responsibility towards the future generations of humanity.²¹

It should be also noted that zoological gardens strive to create the most optimal conditions for life and development of animals. The manifestation of this is the striving for the maximum resemblance of natural conditions, providing adequate space, supplying appropriate food or protection against unfavorable weather conditions (by placing thermophilic animals in heated rooms during the winter). Animals are also provided with veterinary care.²² Considering the above as well as taking into account the manifold just purposes of these institutions, it must be stated that establishing and running zoological gardens is within reasonable limits and should not arouse serious moral objections.

b) Sports competitions with the use of animals

Sports competitions in which animals participate are also a form of entertainment. Their origins date back to ancient times as well. At present, the most common disciplines of this kind are horse riding with obstacles, horse racing, dog and dog sled races, polo and dog agility (overcoming the obstacle course by a dog led by voice and movement commands). Such tournaments are attended by both professionals and amateurs for whom they are only a form of spending free time.

Making a moral evaluation of this type of activity, it should be noted that both preparation for the competitions and participation in them serve developing a natural potential of the animal. Its speed, agility or intelligence are therefore shaped. These abilities have utilitarian meaning. Sports competitions may be a preparation of the animal for undertaking other tasks.

¹⁹ G. GABRYŚ, “Rola ogrodów zoologicznych,” 203–205.

²⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Redemptor hominis* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979), No. 15.

²¹ LS, No. 33.

²² K. ŁUKASZEWICZ, *Ogrody zoologiczne. Wczoraj—dziś—jutro* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1975), 237.

During their lifetime, particular skills are developed which can then be used during rescue or combat activities as well as in hunting. It should be also noted that for some animals²³ regular long hours of training and participation in such competitions is necessary to satisfy their basic life needs and maintain good physical condition.²⁴

It can be stated that this type of animal use does not contradict their nature and is certainly placed within reasonable limits. However, some obligations should be indicated. Man's task is to create the right conditions for the animal, which means, above all, to ensure a balanced diet that will help compensate energy losses. It is also important to ensure proper rest after completed training.²⁵

With regard to sports competitions involving animals, there can be a number of other objections, like in the case of any other discipline. In the first place, there is the unsettled will to win, which in contemporary sport has become an anti-value.²⁶ In the analyzed area, it is a very serious threat not only to the spiritual and moral development of man, but also to the life and health of other living beings. Following such tendencies leads to neglecting the natural needs and limitations of animals. In this situation, a responsible breeder or contestant should be guided by the principle that the highest value is the good of the animal.²⁷

In the case of professional sports, which are connected with potentially high profits, there is a temptation to achieve high efficiency not only by means of training, but through the use of doping measures. This behavior should certainly be classified as fraud, negation of justice and a breach of the fundamental principle of sport, namely *fair play*.²⁸ The administration of such substances also poses a serious threat to the life and health of the animals involved in competitions. For this reason, international organizations associating competitors compiled a list of unauthorized chemical compounds and other forms of doping.²⁹

²³ This particularly applies to northern sled dogs (group V FCI, section 1), such as Alaskan malamute, Greenland dog, Samoyed or Siberian husky.

²⁴ S. MLEKODAJ, "Gorczański survival," *Parki Narodowe* 1 (2000): 11.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ M. WYROSTKIEWICZ, "Niemoralne oblicza sportu," *Roczniki Teologiczne [Annals of Theology]* 53 (2006), 3: 174.

²⁷ G. CAOLA, "Animali, attività fisica e sport," in *Fondamenti di bioetica animale*, 109.

²⁸ M. WYROSTKIEWICZ, "Niemoralne oblicza sportu," 176–177.

²⁹ INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF HORSERACING AUTHORITIES, "International Agreement on Breeding and Racing and Appendixes," app. 3, art. 6, <http://www.horseracingintfed.com/default.asp?section=IABRW&area=2#a33>, (access 12.11.2016).

c) Fights involving animals

Another form of using animals for entertainment purposes is organizing fights with their participation. They can take on a twofold form: the animal's opponent may be another animal or a man. The origins of this type of fights date back to ancient times. From 95 BC, when Quintus Scaevola organised the first "amphitheatrical hunts" with the participation of lions, fights between animals and against gladiators were part of the program of the Olympic Games. Their size increased during the empire period. For instance, over 5000 animals were put on stage during only one day of the Olympic Games organized by Titus in 80AD.³⁰

The analyzed phenomenon also takes place at present, although its scale is undoubtedly much smaller. In this context, it should be noted that a significant part of the fights is carried out illegally. Some, however, such as, for example, Spanish Corrida, are a socially and legally accepted form of spending free time.

Both forms of fights are associated with a considerable pain and stress of animals participating in them. It must be noted that, depending on demand, animals are stimulated and aggression is triggered in them. This is often done in a very brutal way, using sharp tools or pharmacological means. In the case of bulls intended for participation in the corrido, the opposite is a common practice. By affecting the senses (especially sight and balance) and limiting the amount of food it is attempted to make them weaker so that they are not too dangerous for a toreador fighting with them. Finally, the fight itself causes serious suffering and ends with death of most animals.³¹

Organization and participation in such performances testifies to a serious loss of conscientiousness. Awareness of the price that must be paid by animals exposed to severe pain, stress, and ultimately death, in a man with at least a minimum level of sensitivity would cause a loss of joy or pleasure resulting from participation in such fights.³² Cruelty towards animals is contrary to human dignity.³³ In this context, Pope Francis emphasized that one cannot consider oneself to be a loving creature if one excludes a part of reality from the field of interest.³⁴

³⁰ M. BARDEL "Bestiarium Pliniusza, czyli o relacji ludzi i zwierząt w starożytnym Rzymie," *Znak* 60 (2008), 6: 168–169.

³¹ T. MATKOWSKI, "List otwarty do Ludwika Stommy," *Krytyka Polityczna* 24–25 (2010): 168–169.

³² R. SPAEMANN, *Szczęście a życzliwość. Esej o etyce* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1997), 237.

³³ CCC, No. 2418.

³⁴ LS, No. 92.

A separate moral issue arises in the case of fights between man and animals. It is associated with the danger of losing one's life and health. In 1567, Pope Pius V published a bulla in which he would forbid the clergy and the faithful lay people participating in traditional bullfighting. This prohibition included also fights of other animals. Infringement of this rule by the clergy or the rulers who would organise such fights on their territory could have resulted in excommunication bound by the power of the law itself, and therefore in the most severe of church sanctions. The bullfighters and the observers were covered by an ordinary ban, but in the event of death during such fights they would be deprived of a Catholic funeral. This decision was motivated by the fact that during this type of spectacle, instances of death of their participants or serious body injuries were noted. According to Pope Pius V, participation in such forms of entertainment could have also led to serious spiritual damage, because they had nothing to do with devotion and Christian love.³⁵

It should be noted that dangerous situations also occur in contemporary times.³⁶ Human life is not, however, an absolute value and man has the right to take action connected with risk. Nevertheless, this must be motivated by a proportionate reason which should be more serious, the greater the risk of losing life or health.³⁷ It is difficult to recognize, however, that this is the case with fights with animals, the aim of which is only to provide entertainment of doubtful quality.

Considering the above, it would be right to strive for a complete ban on organizing and participating in such spectacles, despite the fact that they are rooted in many local cultures. Still, man's vocation is to continually improve culture and eliminate those elements which do not serve an integrally understood development of human person. An increase in the understanding of this issue can be gladly noticed. According to statistical surveys, one-third of Spanish society is in favor of banning the *corrida*. In the youngest group, the opponents constitute the majority.³⁸

³⁵ PIUS V, "Bulla *De salutis gregis dominiciin*," *Bullarum, Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum Taurinensis*, vol. VII, Augustae Taurinorum 1862, 630–631.

³⁶ In 2010, José Tomás was seriously injured during a fight. Bull's horn damaged his femoral artery as a result of which he needed an immediate surgery and multiple blood transfusions. The bullfighter left hospital after three months (cf. J. KASZA, *Korrida. Taniec i krew*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Otwarte, 2011), 170–171.

³⁷ L. CICCONE, «*Non uccidere*». *Questioni di morale della vita fisica* (Milano: Edizioni Ares, 1988), 366–367.

³⁸ K. BIERNACKA, "Koniec korridy końcem barbarzyństwa?" *Krytyka Polityczna* 24–25 (2010): 170.

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An exceptional place occupied by man in the hierarchy of beings gives him the opportunity to use animals to achieve his decent and just goals. This also includes using animals for educational and entertainment purposes. Particular attention should be paid to the establishment of zoological gardens, which perform multiple functions. Sports competitions also do not arouse moral objections. However, this cannot be said about fights with the participation of living creatures. Participation in such forms of entertainment is a manifestation of serious brutality of conscience and constitutes a breach of the principles of animal protection from unnecessary pain.

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