

LESSON ELEVEN: A DEIST-FRIENDLY MORAL SYSTEM (PART TWO)

Q11: Why is intelligence the reason some creatures are more valuable than other creatures?

A11: There are at least three reasons. One, the ability to learn and understand is very desirable because it can do much good. Among other things, it has enabled humans to produce much more high-quality food, promote justice, and cure diseases. Two, intelligence enables creatures to experience life. The more intelligent a creature is, the more alive she or he feels and the more aware he or she is of what she or he perceives. And three, intelligence is rare. There is much more space than inorganic things in terms of size, there are many more inorganic things than plants, there are many more plants than animals, and there are many more animals than humans. What is more rare is generally more valuable monetarily and aesthetically than what is less rare.

Q12: Isn't it possible that an animal can feel more alive than a human? For example, doesn't a frightened deer feel more alive than a bored human?

A12: Emotions and thinking are two different ways to feel alive. Both the deer and the human can experience emotions such as fear and boredom, but the human (or at least humans in general) can think more than the deer. Therefore, the human (or at least humans in general) experience life in a different way, a way that is more rational. Simply speaking, an animal does not feel more alive than a human. Both experience emotions, but humans think more intelligent thoughts.

Q13: What if a human is less intelligent than an animal, does that make him or her less valuable than that animal?

A13: No. That human is part of the species *Homo sapiens*. Because *Homo sapiens* as a whole are more intelligent than that animal, that particular unintelligent human should be more valued than that animal.

Q14: What about intelligence within a species, does that make one creature more valuable than another?

A14: When it comes to humans, the simple answer is no, because all humans are equally human.

Q15: But aren't some humans more intelligent than others?

A15: Yes, they are. But intelligence is not the only desirable quality. Kindness, patience, diligence, creativity, and many other qualities are also very valuable. A relatively good human of lesser intelligence probably does more good than a relatively evil human of greater intelligence.

Q16: Are you saying that creatures, even humans, should be valued based on the good they do?

A16: Yes, but in general humans should be valued more than animals, and animals should be valued more than plants, for reasons already mentioned.

Q17: When is pleasure not worth the sacrifice to obtain it?

A17: One example involves intoxication. Imagine that an intelligent human could feel happy all the time by constantly being intoxicated. Constant intoxication would be too much of a sacrifice for whatever pleasure is obtained. One who is constantly intoxicated would experience much less of life and not help others as much as he or she should.

Q18: When is suffering not worth the sacrifice to avoid it?

A18: One example involves suicide. Imagine that a human is just temporarily depressed because she or he lost a valued romantic partner. Suicide might stop the suffering, but it would be too much of a sacrifice for the relief. A number of evil things might happen: 1) the human's conscious existence might end forever, 2) God might discipline the human for foolishly ending his or her life, 3) the individual's suffering might not end with death, 4) many people who have not died might grieve for the suicide victim, 5) the suicide victim could have done much good in this life had she or he chosen to live, and 6) the suicide victim could have worked through the suffering in this life and found happiness again.

Q19: What can we humans do to maximize pleasure and minimize suffering for the greatest number of creatures?

A19: We can live according to the following rules and rights.