

It's a Lion

The uproar over the killing of a lion named Cecil in Zimbabwe by an American dentist, Dr. Walter Palmer, is further proof that secular society inevitably produces moral confusion.

In saying that, I do not in any way defend the killing of a protected animal. First, I do not hunt for sport (among other reasons, my religion, Judaism, opposes it). Second, if the lion suffered for a prolonged period, that would add to my condemnation. Third, if Palmer knowingly killed a protected animal, he should be prosecuted.

Having said that, most of the reactions to what he did are more frightening than what Palmer did.

Since I began writing and lecturing, I have been warning about the breakdown of the distinction between humans and animals (or, as the secular nearly always put it, "other animals"). For decades I have asked high school students: "If your dog or cat (or hamster or other beloved pet) and a stranger were drowning, which would you try to save first?"

In virtually every instance, the response is the same: One-third vote to save their dog, one-third to save the human being, and one-third don't know what they would do (or should do – but there are few shoulds in the lives of many secular Americans). In other words, two-thirds of American young people (and by now, presumably adults, as well) wouldn't vote to save a human being they didn't know before the animal they love.

Love has come to trump moral standards. With the breakdown of objective moral standards, personal feelings have become the sources of right and wrong.

In Western Europe and North America, we live in the first godless and religion-less generation in Western (and probably

world) history, and without Judeo-Christian values, there is no compelling reason to hold human worth above animal worth. Judeo-Christian values are based on the Bible, which asserts the fundamental principle that human beings, not animals, are created in God's image. Therefore, human life is sacred; animal life is not.

This in no way suggests that one can mistreat an animal.

Deuteronomy 25:4: An animal must be free to eat while working in the field; it may not be muzzled when it treads out grain.

Deuteronomy 22:10: Given their different sizes and gaits, one may not attach an ox and a donkey to the same plough.

The Ten Commandments: Animals must have a day of rest just as humans do.

Nevertheless, the distinction between human and animal has been fundamental to Judeo-Christian values and societies. That's why we say that a person who has deliberately taken the life of another person has murdered that person. Whereas, we don't say "murdered" when describing the deliberate taking of an animal's life; we say "killed." No one murders a chicken. Or a lion.

Until very recently, at least.

The secular moralists at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) who equate human and animal life do believe that killing animals is murder – to such an extent that the organization equates Americans who barbecue chickens with the Nazis who cremated Jews in the Holocaust. See their anti-poultry campaign: "Holocaust on Your Plate."

And now, PETA has called for the execution of the American dentist. After all, if he committed premeditated murder, why not execute him? (Ingrid Newkirk, PETA's president, later said she didn't mean it literally.)

Likewise, in The Guardian, Rose George, a British journalist (who began her career at The Nation, a left-wing magazine), wrote: "I'd rather not attempt to comprehend the inexplicable act that is the murder of animals for fun."

And The New York Times reported: "'Murderer! Terrorist!' one protester, Rachel Augusta, screamed into a megaphone."

Palmer has received thousands of death threats and has been pilloried by many of the confused moral thinkers who populate Hollywood. (Last year, Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem charged Israel with committing genocide in Gaza.)

It is instructive that Zimbabweans are dumbfounded at the hysteria over a lion's death. Their country is one of the poorest on Earth. (Having been there, I can personally attest to how poor it is.) And its brutal, psychopathic ruler, Robert Mugabe, has had innumerable Zimbabweans tortured to death. Now the people of Zimbabwe are hearing the West lament a death in their country. Of a lion.

Dennis Prager's latest book, "The Ten Commandments: Still the Best Moral Code," was just published by Regnery. He is a nationally syndicated radio show host and creator of PragerUniversity.com.

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