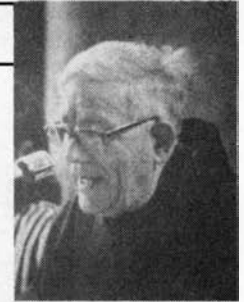


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## Interview: Prof. Luigi Iammarrone

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# Do animals have souls, too?

by Antonio Gaspari

*For over a year Rome has been under siege by groups of animal-rights fanatics, who, presenting themselves under various labels, have been demanding to meet with the Pope to convince him to sanction the concept of the existence of immortal souls in animals. Among those besieging the Vatican have been Prince Philip of Britain, head of the World Wildlife Fund; U.S. media magnate Ted Turner; and Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan—all proponents of the anti-human malthusian doctrines which the Catholic Church has repeatedly condemned. Dozens of essays have been written on this topic. The latest book, which has just arrived in the Italian bookstores, is by the French writer Jean Prieur and is entitled, Animals Have a Soul.*

*To clarify and deepen the discussion, we interviewed Franciscan priest Prof. Luigi Iammarrone, who teaches Metaphysics and Dogmatic Theology at the Pontifical Theology Faculty of St. Bonaventure. Professor Iammarrone knows the problem in depth, as he has already published a series of 11 articles related to the theory of evolution.*

**EIR:** The animal rights groups and their philosophers maintain that animals have souls like those of human beings. Do you think this is true?

**Iammarrone:** There is an abyss between the soul of animals and the soul of man. The soul of animals is a material reality, which comes into being by the transformation of matter and ceases to exist insofar as it returns into the potentiality of matter, whereas the human soul is spiritual, immaterial, and subsistent, and hence incorruptible and immortal, and comes into being by creation, by the direct, immediate intervention of God. Being created in the image and likeness of God, who is infinitely perfect Spirit, it is made to live forever, it is immortal; such immortality is connected with the existence of God. The animals have a soul which is simply a vital principle, which renders formally alive a portion of matter, within whose bosom or environment it originates and ceases to exist.

The soul of animals is a vital principle intrinsically dependent on the matter which it informs. All the operations of animals are countersigned by the stigma of essential depen-

dence on the material subject, for which reason, it ceases to exist with the death of the being so composed. Subject essentially to time, the soul of animals is destined to cease with all that which passes with time.

**EIR:** What is the role of man in creation. What relationship exists between man and the sensible Universe?

**Iammarrone:** There is a cause and effect relation, albeit only partial, between man and the sensible universe. Man depends on the plants, the animals, and the universe, because he lives in the universe and he is subject in particular, with regard to his body, to the phenomena which take place in it. Without the influence of the external world, man could not live at all. Everyone knows the phenomenon of photosynthesis by chlorophyll, which makes life possible in animals and human beings. If there were no chlorophyll photosynthesis, there would be no possibility for either men or animals to breathe.

**EIR:** The environmentalists assert that man has arrogated the right to impose his own dominion over other species. They say that man is equal to the animals by 99%.

**Iammarrone:** Man is not equal to the animals. If he were equal to them, he would not be able to use the flora and fauna to improve his own conditions of life. Man is essentially superior to all animals, because of being endowed with intelligence and free will with which he can orient himself toward the the Highest Truth and Highest Good, to which he is endlessly called to share his own eternal life of knowledge and love. Man is the lieutenant of God in Creation, to whom all the beings of the sensible universe are subject. Only man, because he is a person, is the subject of rights and duties. All other beings of the universe, including animals, are subjected to man as their king. The Bible says that God, after having created man, saw that all was very good. Hence man is the ultimate end of all the realities which preceded him. It is man who is placed in creation so that he will operate, work, and transform creation, not ordering it for himself as the ultimate end, but fulfilling the task which God gave him to transform the universe in the praise and glory of the Creator.

**EIR:** One of the “saints” of the animal rights movement, Peter Singer, author of the book *Animal Liberation*, has written: “If we compare a handicapped child to an animal, a dog or a pig for example, we often find that the animals have greater capacity, both realized and potential, for rationality, self-consciousness, communication, and every other quality which can be considered morally significant.” What do you think?

**Iammarrone:** That’s absurd. The handicapped child is still a rational being, a person who transcends incommensurably all animals, all plants, the entire material universe. Keep in mind the considerations of Blaise Pascal when he speaks of three kingdoms: those of Nature, Spirit, and Grace. “The infinite distance of bodies from the Spirit is a symbol of the infinite distance of spirits from Christian love, because this is supernatural. All bodies together and all spirits together and all their productions do not outweigh the slightest movement of charity. This belongs to an infinitely higher order. All the bodies together could not unleash even a tiny thought. And this cannot be done, because thought belongs to a higher order.” (Pascal, Fragment 793). There is no leap from the first degree, that of bodies, to the second degree, that of spirits, just as there is no leap from the second degree, that of spirits, to that of the Grace of God. The handicapped child occupies a degree incommensurably higher than that of bodies. With his intelligence and his will, the handicapped child is in fact ordered by the infinite being which is God, and finds only in Him his full realization.

**EIR:** According to the animal rights movement, between man and the animals there only exists a natural evolution, and hence they accuse the Catholic Church of preaching an overly anthropocentric conception of the world.

**Iammarrone:** For philosophical and scientific reasons, I am personally against evolutionism. Still, you know that even some Catholic scientists maintain this at least in part, that is with certain conditions. First of all, it is admitted that God the Creator, who has infused laws into matter itself, in virtue of which it can develop by passing from one form to another, down to the production of the human body. Naturally, as far as this last statement is concerned, we have to be more specific. Some say that, while granting that the human body may be derived from the body of a primate, nonetheless the passage which allows the body of the primate to become a human body, is not a natural passage, but requires the intervention of God, who creates the spiritual soul which is absolutely not derivable from matter and infuses it in a portion of matter capable of being informed by it. Pius XII in his encyclical *Humani Generis* of Aug. 12, 1950 touched upon this question. He said: “With regard to the origin of the human body from a preexisting primate, the children of the Church are free to maintain that the human body was directly created by the Creator or that the Creator utilized the body of a primate. Yet the children

of the Church must be disposed to accept that which the teachings of the Church may decide tomorrow, for one or another of these hypotheses, on the basis of the teachings of the Holy Scripture and of Tradition.”

**EIR:** The animal rights people assert that St. Francis considered that men are similar to animals.

**Iammarrone:** That is an exaggeration. St. Francis did not only love animals, but all creatures, Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Brother Fire. For St. Francis, all creatures are related to one another as brothers and sisters, because they all derive from the same source: the goodness of God. It is not true that he presupposed equality between man and animals; indeed, exactly the opposite is true. On consuming meat, for example, he told his friars that if Christmas came on a Friday, they could eat a double ration of meat, and the animals could have a double ration of hay distributed to them, to honor the birth of Our Lord Jesus. St. Francis was not only no vegetarian, but also he was in favor of a moderate consumption of meat. St. Francis was very human, because he was a Saint; sanctity renders man truly man, and does not prohibit him from eating what God has created for his use. He had no problems to deal with concerning the use of lower creatures, but he had a limpid, luminous, lucid mind, about the difference that exists between man and the creatures which are inferior to him, and at the same time he had a heart full of love toward all God’s creatures.

**EIR:** The animalists are carrying out a ferocious campaign against animal experimentation conducted in medical laboratories at research centers. One rock singer, Grace Slick, has proposed that criminals condemned to death should replace the animals. What do you think of that?

**Iammarrone:** That proposal is absurd. The individual condemned to death is still a human person, who must always be respected as such. He cannot be treated like a beast, or otherwise we would have the degradation of the dignity of the human person. Personally, I am against the death penalty, since there are so many other methods available to man to punish and redeem the guilty.

**EIR:** They say that man is the cancer of society, an error of evolution.

**Iammarrone:** That man sometimes commits errors and damages nature, cannot be denied nor should it be approved of, but that he is a freak of nature, this is very false. Man is the only being of this visible universe who is directly and immediately intended by God, because he is the only being who is made in the image and likeness of God, with whom God can speak and have a dialogue. God cannot have a dialogue with any being that lacks reason and free will, because no being of that sort is capable of knowing and loving him. Hence the universe was created precisely in

relation to man, given that God cannot have a direct relationship with the universe in the sense explained above. The existence of the universe makes no sense without man, because man is the being capable of worshiping and thanking God in the name of all the beings which lack reason. We can understand how the three Jewish children in the fiery furnace of Babylon could express themselves in that wonderful hymn of benediction to God, to which they invited all creatures. St. Francis expressed in his Canticle of Brother Sun the same invitation to the creatures that all should praise God. It is man who is capable of speaking with God and thanking him, also in the name of the other creatures, who are incapable of knowing him, praising him, and loving him. So man is not some freak, he is rather the proximate end of visible nature, through whom nature is brought back to God. Man therefore does not ultimately live for himself. He participates in the absoluteness of God, and this is his real grandeur and dignity, which sets him above all creatures who lack reason and free will.

**EIR:** The evolutionists assert that the natural world is determined by the law of natural selection, realized, according to the malthusian theorem, by the geometric growth of population and the arithmetic growth of production. In their view, the strongest resist and the weakest succumb. For this reason they are in favor of abortion, euthanasia, and even eugenics laws.

**Iammarrone:** If man surpasses in grandeur and dignity all the creatures of the sensible material universe, his existence can never be subordinated to the activities and the existence of beings which are lower than him. Man is a being who exists in himself and for himself, who is capable of directing himself by divine grace, through the mediation of his conscious and free activity to the achievement of the ultimate goal which is God himself, seen and loved directly in his essence. It follows that his dignity must be respected in every case, without any exception. Laws cannot be permitted that may violate his freedom and dignity and his fundamental right to life.

**EIR:** Radical ecologists say that they are going back to religious phenomena similar to pre-Christian pantheistic worship; they say they worship Mother Earth.

**Iammarrone:** I maintain that in some pre-Christian religions, even if the worship of Mother Earth existed, they never went as far as the statements made by the modern ecologists. Because in antiquity, the adoration of nature and certain natural forces was in many cases a means by which certain primitive communities were trying to represent the Creator to themselves. In other words, even if certain men believed in polytheism, if you study the phenomenon more in depth, not all of them denied the existence of the divinity.

They worshiped the natural forces as representative of

a transcendent divinity. In various primitive peoples, the symbols used were taken from their observation of the phenomena of the universe, such as the sun, moon, night, day. But they did not identify the natural phenomenon with God; rather they considered it as an expression of God.

Differently from the modern animal rights types, like Gaia's followers who worship nature and its phenomena, using them to replace the real divinity. Pagan polytheism is surely a degraded expression of the divinity, but it did not interpret natural forces by identifying them with true divinity. In truth, man is made of soul and body, which are reconciled with the mystery of the incarnation: According to the Christian dogma, the Son of God became man and made himself available to man to share his true divine nature. The aberrations of the animalists find no justification after 20 centuries of Christianity. I believe that the negation of man by certain fringes of the environmentalists is purely an instrument with an anti-Christian function.

There can be no divinization of matter. The absolute cannot be matter, because the absolute is infinitely perfect reality, independent of any other reality whatsoever. The absolute is infinite, conscious, free reality, which knows that it exists, and is the beginning and end of everything. Matter does not know that it exists, and therefore it is impossible to identify it with a maximally personal reality. It is a contradiction.

How can matter be the absolute if it has no self-consciousness, and is in no way free and the master of its activity? Being in all its parts or elements and totally in itself, matter cannot rise to the role of Absolute reality.

**EIR:** Hence this negation of man is an instrument of the negation of God?

**Iammarrone:** It is evident, that by denying God, one denies also man in his value and dignity. Denying the existence of man as a free and rational being, it is then easy to reduce everything to matter. If we scrutinize the structure of matter, the structure of the laws of animated beings, we observe an order which is so wise, so efficient, so wonderful, that it surely cannot derive from pure matter, because that is unconscious. Also the evolutionist theory, by setting God aside, cannot subsist. Matter does not develop by itself, it has no metaphysical justification in itself. Matter is the lowest degree of reality; it cannot be the highest.

If we grant evolution within certain limits, it presupposes the existence of the Creator anyway. A reality which evolves, which changes, cannot exist by itself. On the other hand, man's existence is important to transform the material world. If he had not existed, the earth would be thrown into a wild and disordered state. It was man who transformed the inhospitable forests, desert zones, swampy lands into habitable lands. Man humanized nature, and he must continue in his work of transformation of matter initiated by the Creator.