

Do Animals Have Eternal Souls?

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What happens to animals when they die is a question many people wonder about, especially those who form close bonds with animals.

Do animals experience the meaningless oblivion that atheists insist await us all or do they transition to another plane as people of faith believe is their own fate after the body fails?

As we observe animals give and receive joy, love, and also suffer true grief over the loss of their offspring or human companions, it is difficult to

still hold that they do not have a soul.

But nor is it easy to imagine that, on completion of our life on earth, we transfer to the afterlife to find it teeming with the souls of every biological creature that has ever lived like some overstocked Jurassic Park — tens of millions of years' worth of T-Rex's and every other dinosaur that ever lived and died on earth.

The former is hard to accept as we have experience of forming deep and reciprocal loving bonds with animals, and as love is a spiritual element, that would imply there is something spiritual being loved by us and returning love to us.



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The latter is hard to accept because it just seems so bizarre that thousands of trillions of animals would pile up in the afterlife as the earth and possibly other planets swarm and crawl with creatures in a continuous generational cycle.

But life and existence itself is bizarre when you think about it. Something cannot be said to be untrue just because it seems bizarre. In any case, the real estate in the afterlife may well accommodate any number of arrivals. However, believing something exists because we have a deep emotional and spiritual relationship with it is quite rational.

“Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21)

The idea that animals do not have souls has no scriptural basis. It's just something people communally decided. In my view, they did so to artificially accentuate their own importance in the scheme of things and to God. This came from insecurity as it is not actually necessary to establish uniqueness in order to have intrinsic eternal value and to be counted as a child of God. Others need not be excluded so that we can be included. Our status before God is not a zero sum game.

I used to believe that animals don't have eternal souls as that is what I was taught, but after contemplating the matter for many years I no longer think that is the case. But nor do I think that animals transfer to the afterlife as is when they die — as humans do.

So how to reconcile my sense that animals have a spiritual counterpart to their biological form yet do not transition to the plane of the afterlife?

If you consider it took God 14 billion years to create and refine a physical environment and body that could nurture a human soul (and who knows how much longer in the preparation phase), then how much more of a monumentally difficult and involved task must it have been for God to create the eternal soul of discrete beings such as humans?

Surely it cannot be that it would take God at least 14 billion years to bring about rocks, plants, flesh and bones that are all temporary states of the fundamental energy that makes up matter yet an instant for God to flash an eternal soul into being?

The eternal soul is a far more complex and profound creation than even we are yet aware and I hold that creating such is an infinitely more involved process than creating the temporary fleshly body that incubates the soul for five to ten decades in its initial phase.

Of course, in many ways, God creating the physical universe, the substantial afterlife universe and the

invisible, transcendent human soul are all part of the same process, but each part is still its own process.

I find myself strangely leaning towards a “reincarnation” model when it comes to the dual questions of the formulation of the eternal soul and spiritual nature of animals. I don’t mean I was different people in the past or even an animal.

My hypothesis is God saw to it that evolution would take place and as beings of ever greater complexity emerged on earth throughout the past few billion years, then God perhaps incubated elements of what would eventually become the souls of his human children in those beings.

I don’t hold that the complete soul of an amoeba jumped into a fish egg when it expired and the soul of the fish jumped into an otter and then into higher creatures, and on and on. Rather that as animals live and love and parent and grieve then it seems to me that, especially the higher creatures (some whom have been known to actually die from grief), have remarkably similar biology, psychology and emotional states to human beings. Might it be that this animal biology and psychology and emotional life have a corresponding spiritual counterpart?

Animals, like humans, are driven by their biology and psychology to strive for life, procreation and environmental control/harmony (sound familiar?). We can observe certain animals within a species or even a pack/herd/troupe rise above their peers as they make great efforts in intelligence, bravery, leadership, nurturing, conciliatory behavior, and even sacrifice. All of these are qualities of character that we describe as noble when manifest in human beings. Just as with humans, some animals become selfish bullies and engage in mean and unnecessary torment and even the killing of their peers.

Might it be that God knew or even orchestrated that a vast environment with trillions of animals, millions of different species and millions of communities of animals would all interact among themselves over hundreds of millions of years.

In doing so, some of those animals over many disparate species might refine their natures to the point that God could see to it that the most refined aspect of the nascent souls of the most refined individual animals would be maintained after physical death and become a component or even foundational part of what would eventually form the soul of a human being.



Essentially, all of creation is God’s culture plate and incubator for the ingredients for what will eventually produce a human soul. After all, the entire human physiology is the ecosystem for the raw ingredients that ultimately comprise the sperm which initiate a new physical being when it finds its way to the egg.

So, again, not that this animal re-started as that animal again and again and eventually became a human being. Rather, much of what is the animal falls away at death, both the body and the mind/spirit, but certain spiritual aspects endure and

become part of God’s recipe for higher beings, just as some parts of the physical bodies of animals are incorporated into our own via our digestive system.

We also know that God doesn’t flash complex things and certainly not complex beings into existence in an instant. Rather, He uses process and time and the incorporation of basic elements into higher and higher states.

Scientists, even atheist scientists, state that they know of nothing more complex in the universe than the human biological brain. Again, I suggest that the complexity of the human brain and body and the eons-long preparation required to bring it about pales in comparison to the human eternal soul and the process God would have required to set in motion to realize it. Then is it likely that God performs instant magic when He brings about a human soul or that He does so through carefully designed, long, divine process?

Furthermore, there is something elegant about the idea that God used the same animal kingdom to incubate and prepare the human proto-soul as He did to produce the human physical vessel to contain and nurture it.

I don’t believe God does things by halves. God may well realize a creation that is a temporarily lesser being in terms of ability and awareness (we know this as we all were such as babies and children) but not trap such a being and eternally block them from knowing Him fully and attaining maximally great personal development.

Even if such a being lacked a mind that was designed or evolved to have awareness of their inability to be more than they are or know God in full, it would still be a tragic eternal fate just as it is when some conditions trap and block dear human children from full mental and emotional development despite their condition causing them to be blissful in their ignorance. We do not accept that such children should never fully develop and also relate to their parents as peers, so we research solutions and cures.

I do not believe God would accept this eternal limited state for animals should it be that animals do in fact have eternal souls.

And as we hold that the flesh is an accelerant for spiritual development as people grow in their physical life, then what better arena than millions of years of the animal kingdom for God to seed and incubate elements of the eternal, soul of His children who will one day be peers as well as children of God.

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