



A Need for Reflexivity Concerning Animal Welfare and Christian Ethics

Austin Meeks

Genesis 1:26-28

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may **rule** over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and **subdue** it. **Rule** over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

(Bible Gateway passage: Genesis 1:26-28 - New International Version. (n.d.). Bible Gateway. Retrieved February 20, 2021, from <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%201%3A26-28&version=NIV>)

Despotic Interpretation

- Literal reading, Fundamentalist
- Historically influential; contemporarily less accepted
- Humans have “free reign” over nature; no moral culpability
- Strong anthropocentrism

Stewardship Interpretation

- Weak Anthropocentrism
- Responsibility to animals/nature but. . .
- Humans are still *exceptional* and unique
- Maintains categorical separation

Citizenship Interpretation

- Blurs boundary between human and animal relationship
- Eco-centric
- Aims to eliminate human exceptionalism
- Most subversive and radical yet most progressive

Reflexivity

Reflexive Disposition	Traditional Disposition
Dynamic	Static
Limitless	Limited
Adaptive	Stagnant
Experiential	Constructed
Conscious	Unconscious/habitual
Boundlessly Inclusive	Narrowly Exclusive

Reflexivity

- Despot – Cannot be sustained; novelty overcomes tradition.
- Stewardship – Will morph into citizenship approach
- Citizenship – Nascent form of reflexivity; shows promise toward positive expansion
- Not limited to Christianity but all ideologies and anthropocentric constructs.