

Lifestyle

A Question of Ethics

Matt MacDonald

One.

I thought we were fucked for sure.

It was the weekend, and we were on our way home from grocery shopping. I was driving and I had my son and my youngest daughter with me in the backseats. We went to the grocery store the same way we always did and we came home from the grocery store the exact same way.

The way we go home is by way of a main road. The speed limit is 35 miles per hour and it goes through a relatively residential area that is perforated here and there with schools, an office park, homes and woods.

The wooded areas aren't substantial. It's not like Sherwood Forest or anything. They always struck me as aesthetic choices made by the developers to give the people in the neighborhood something better to look at other than the house next to them.

As I was driving, I see this "thing" burst out of a line of bushes by the office park. These bushes were roughly 60 feet ahead of me and lined "the slow lane".

I was driving in the "slow lane".

At first, I didn't know what in the Hell it was. I have had this type of thing happen to me before: I get behind the wheel and I'll see something familiar happen outside of the car or I'll pass by something familiar but it takes my brain a couple of seconds to catch up. I blame the hypnotic nature of driving. The wheels rolling on the road, the sounds of traffic outside of the car, the chatter from your passengers or the radio; it's a perfect recipe for letting your mind wander.

"What the Hell is that", I said.

I initially thought it was a dog. Someone's dog had made a jailbreak, found its way to the office park and then got spooked. As we get progressively closer, I see that it's too big to be a dog and it's moving way too fast.

We get a little closer, car still cruising at 35 MPH, and my brain puts 2 + 2 together.

It's a deer. It's coming straight for us and I know unequivocally that I am going to collide with this woodland creature.

At this point in time, I am 33-years old. I have been a licensed driver since I was 17 years of age. At no point in time have I ever been in a car accident of any kind and I wouldn't know what in the Hell to do if I were in one.

I blink really hard just to make sure that I wasn't seeing things. No good: there's still a deer on the same trajectory, muscles rippling, flying at us in full gallop like the devil was chasing it.

I do a quick check of the mirrors: I had a car next to me, a car behind me and a car behind the car that was next to me. There's no way out of this.

Two.

Our responsibilities as humans to other species are hopelessly bogged down in what you believe ethically.

Case in point: it has been common practice in Afghanistan to have surgeons train on pigs. These aren't the fetal pigs that we all had to deal with in Biology 101. These are live pigs. After intentionally wounding the pig, the pig is brought to the surgeon and the surgeon patches it up. The reasoning is that if the surgeon is able to stabilize the pig's condition and patch it up successfully, then soldiers as well as the Afghan people will benefit (Rosenthal, 2007).

There seems to be two schools of thought with regards to the ethical responsibilities of animals: human centered ethics and life centered ethics.

With human centered ethics it's really a case of 'what's good for the goose is good for the gander'. Hence, intentionally wounding Ms. Piggy. Additionally, human centered ethics bolsters it's way of thinking by proposing that it's our responsibility to care for the world and the animals in it so that one day we may discover a cure to a certain disease that would enable our preservation.

Life centered ethics proposes that everything (yes, everything) has a right to life. Even bugs (Environmental Ethics, 2008). While this may seem a bit odd and silly, it should be taken into consideration that it is a part of human nature to dominant our environment, even if it is in a small way, consciously or unconsciously.

As it can be seen, not only do our ethical responsibilities rely on what we believe, they also rely on where we draw the line.



Oink? (Photo Courtesy of Google Images)

Three.

I slowed down as much as I could. Just when impact seemed imminent, the deer breaks hard to its right and crashes head first into the car that was next to me, pin-wheeling and landing directly in front of my car in a twitching heap.

The worst thing about the whole situation wasn't the job of explaining to my kids they don't save deer in this situation, it was the awkward sixty seconds that passed before I realized that the person with whom the deer collided was only going to drive off.

I was agog.

A deer crashes into your car and you're just going to drive off?

I'm sure that it is a Hell of a thing to have happen to someone. Maybe this person didn't have their cell phone on them. Maybe they didn't have the faintest idea of what to do when you hit a deer. It's understandable, to a degree.

They were headed the same way we were headed. I knew that I couldn't sit there and hold up traffic. Something had to be done.

After I caught up with them, I got their license plate number and I pulled into the first parking lot that I could find to gather my wits.

Animals get hit by cars all of the time. It's intense to see what's thought to be a "woodland" creature get taken out by a man-made object and have it slowly die in front of you.

I knew I needed to be responsible. I just couldn't let something like this pass, not after it happened in front of my children. How would I feel 30 years from now when my son is my age and he brings this up as one of his earliest memories and I didn't do anything?

I called the cops. I told them what had happened. I told them where it had happened and I told them, in essence, who was responsible for it.

Don't get the wrong idea: I'm not the "deer police" nor am I an animal rights activist. I am a man that saw something happen that most people won't see nor will they have happen to them. As a responsible adult and a responsible father I needed to draw the line and show my kids the difference between humans and animals.



(Photo Courtesy of Google Images)

Sources Consulted

Rosenthal, Susan. (2007). Animal Rights or Human Responsibilities. Retrieved from <http://susanrosenthal.com/articles/animal-rights-or-human-responsibilities>

Environmental Ethics. (2008). Retrieved from

