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Creatures of Empire

by Joe Escobar - Friday, October 7, 2016, 10:04 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Creatures of Empire topic.

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Animals & Religion

by Brian Schireman - Saturday, October 8, 2016, 4:32 PM

The religious and spiritual differences between the Natives and the Europeans ran deep, but were especially different in the way they viewed animals, and in this case the domesticated forms of animals such as pigs, sheep and cattle that were brought over by the Europeans. The Natives viewed animals as "spiritual protectors" or beings that were sharing the earth with humans yet not necessarily unequal to them, which was in contrast to the way Europeans viewed them as they saw them as property.

One of the main conflicts of these animals being in the new world is that the Europeans did not have full control of the animals which led to them wandering into Indian lands and destroying Indian crops, grasses and plants among other things vital to the Natives. If a native were to stumble upon a European animal in the wild, they often treated them as they would a native animal in the wild, usually ending in the killing of it. What the Indians didn't know, however, is that killing a wild animal was different than killing European property, and the Indians could be charged for crimes against the English.

I would say I more closely relate to the idea that animals are beings put on earth for other reasons than to serve us, however I believe our ability to keep ourselves above them and recognize them helps us keep our own humanity.

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Religious Differences

by Breana Kobold - Saturday, October 8, 2016, 4:51 PM

DeJohn Anderson discusses some interesting facts in her Podcast. The religious differences between these two groups of people were vast. The Native Americans considered animals to be "other than human persons". They did not consider humans to be superior and animals to be inferior but rather animals were other living beings sharing the same earth. They also believed that some larger wildlife had spiritual protectors and so these animals were valued and revered. This is greatly different than what the Europeans thought of animals. Learning from the bible and from their Christian traditions they believed humans were superior to all other life, that they can lawfully own animals as their property. So when some of the Europeans free-range livestock happened to wander into an Indian hunting trap the Native peoples would often be treated as a criminal and held liable for damages. I more closely identify with the Indians on this subject. I think it's more of a modern day way of thinking rather than just a Christian view but humans really believe they are superior to animals and this is seen in numerous religions all over the world. I don't think we consider ourselves to be superior just because we have the brain capacity for critical thinking and planning but collectively humans believe they are more important than animals and that their lives matter more. I personally do not believe this. I believe the way that the Indians did that we are all equal beings living on the same earth.

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Built in hate

by John Casares - Friday, October 14, 2016, 11:07 AM

I find it incredibly interesting and in some way scary that these Indians would get persecuted and tried/harmed if they somehow killed or damaged the Europeans animals or their so called "property". I understand their cultural differences were incredibly large but I just wonder why the Europeans did not initially understand that they thought and acted differently so their values towards things would be vastly different. What I have noticed through our recently plunge into our studies of the relationships between Indians and Europeans is a predisposition towards that Indians that any action they make are wrongful, even if it is an accident or misunderstandings. I know this is a trend that continues and is largely due the aforementioned "cultural differences" but there also is the looming idea of the racism and hate that probably drove them to persecute the Indians much worse even though they did not have the same understandings of their property and what guidelines corresponded.

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Thousands of Years of Isolation

by Taylor Freeman - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 9:46 PM

While listening to this interview, I couldn't help but think that, as far as I can see, a good deal of the strife between English settlers and Native American peoples came from simple cultural misunderstanding more than anything else. It reminded me of earlier in the term when we read about the culture differences of these two groups in regards to war and how Native American tended to kidnap their enemies while the Europeans coming to the new world would kill their enemies on the battlefield. To either side the other looks appalling and barbaric. It is very interesting to think about how separated the Native peoples were from the rest of the world. The people of the eurasian continent had thousands of years to acclimate to each other's cultures and learn from each other but the people native to the Americas were totally isolated for that same length of time. This is the ultimate difference between the two people but the effect is astoundingly complex. Even something as simple as the way we treat animals can evidently be blown into something worthy of bloodshed, and this is just one facet of the differences between the two cultural groups.

I also find a lot of humor in considering the idea of some young Native American seeing a cow for the first time as it destroys some crop of theirs. Cows are pretty big so I would imagine that seeing it for the first time would be quite strange and probably scary as well.

-Taylor Freeman

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Cultural Differences and Relevancy

by John Casares - Monday, October 10, 2016, 10:17 PM

DeJohn Anderson suggests that the main problem lies in the difference of the Indians and Europeans views of the animals and the life around them. It is stated in the podcast that the Europeans viewed any animal as property, while the Indians just saw them as other lifeforms. The animals were not lesser than the Indians merely different in make. Dejohn Anderson solidifies this idea when she states "These Creatures were other than human persons" (Dejohn Anderson Podcast 2:30) speaking in regards to the Indians views of the animal. These other lifeforms were seen by the Indians as spiritual protectors or had spiritual powers which of course would conflict with the very Christian Europeans. From everything I have learned through the studies of History in this era this would have caused a huge cultural rift between the Indians and Europeans, where today not as much. I do not believe that animals are spiritual in any sense, at least no more spiritual than we are or anything else alive. While I do not believe things to be spiritual, I do have a somewhat respect for them and would like to say my modern sensibilities place me somewhere in the middle of these two radically different ideas from these earlier times.

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Re: Creatures of Empire

by Hope Kelley - Friday, October 14, 2016, 3:05 PM

I agree with DeJohn Anderson in what she is saying about the animals the settlers brought over being more strange to the Natives than the settlers themselves. Like she said in the audio clip, Natives have seen Europeans before from fishes stopping on the shores but never staying. So when they do stay, they bring these odd animals with them that are completely new. She also stated that the Natives probably ran into these animals by themselves without any settlers nearby. It's like someone actually seeing bigfoot for the first time ever. All of sudden this creature you could never imagine existing is there right in front of you. I completely agree with Anderson.

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Modern Landscape

by John Casares - Friday, October 14, 2016, 5:29 PM

There is one big similarities with these problems and today's issues that pops out to me. It is almost like the Europeans represent the right wing conservatives of today and the Indians are the left wing liberal thinking peoples. Animals are disappearing from this earth at an alarming rate in recent years. According to a study done by IFLScience, The current extinction rate is approximately 100 extinctions per million species per year, or 1,000 times higher than natural background rates. Entire species are on the verge of being extinct and certain groups of people take this matter to the heart and other brush it off as a non concern. The Indians still killed these animals but like the left wing liberal side they had a somewhat respect, to them humans never controlled or owned these animals they were just a part of life on earth, while the Europeans think they were their property as the right wings believe it is their right to kill them. It is fascinating to see these comparisons even if they do not fit perfectly they correlate in more ways than thought.

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Re: Modern Landscape

by Taylor Freeman - Friday, October 14, 2016, 10:11 PM

I see where you're going I think the metaphor hold up to a degree. I think the big difference is that the left and right wings of today's politics represent 2 sides of the same coin, whereas the colonizing europeans thought of themselves as above the natives they encountered. I think in their eyes they thought of themselves as a superior race to the Native Americans. I think an even closer metaphor can be created between the right wing (and left wing but to a lesser extent), vs. almost any minority group of today. Incidentally this still includes Native Americans, as we can see from the current Dakota Access Pipeline debacle.

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Re: Modern Landscape

by John Casares - Saturday, October 15, 2016, 2:37 PM

Yeah definitely a more closely related comparison and something that is often overlooked when studying history. I agree with you that they are essentially two sides of the same coin but I often see it as right wings believe themselves above the left wings or at least regard themselves smarter or more able to lead. While it is a pretty thin connection it can be seen and the lines can be drawn towards each specific group. I think it would be incredibly interesting to see a left vs right wing debate about this exact topic. I wonder what sort of outcome both sides would come to.

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