THE ARTIST AND THE LOBSTER

Japanese doll, dainty in traditional dress, bearing with pride the gastronomic work of art; cadmium red, bold and hard as Spanish ceramic, harshly outlined against sprays of parsley viridian. The artist says, "It's a painting; I'll take the shell home to draw; see the angle of the feelers." Others, salivating, dip plump white morsels and take them between their teeth, buttery sauce drooling down their chins. I look and look away, my mind on the victim of their ecstasy; once a living, feeling thing creeping along crusty sea bottoms, outer skeleton a mottled-mauve green, Nature's own camouflage not concealed from the lobster trap; snared and captured, pincers pegged and bound, imprisoned in icy water tanks until the gentle Japanese maiden grasps its skeletal sides, flings it into the iron pot and doesn't watch as it churns and struggles in boiling death, feelers twisting in agony into shapes the artist will draw.

Mary Sternberg

Though this sounds very similar to the humane Bands of Mercy, the key here is the fact that animals are not conceded to have rights themselves.

Though Thomas Aquinas may be read as advocating kindness to animals in order to teach us to be kind to people, there is a more logical ordering for a Catholic's concern. Since our first duty is to God and then to our fellow humans, we should start our humane endeavors at the top of the scale. If we have an abundance of charity to spare, then we may be kind to the animal world. Though the Catholic may be accountable before God for his/her treatment of animals, he/she should be quite aware of the danger lurking in the "empathetic fallacy." The lack of a rational soul "renders impossible any relation of justice or charity to the animal world." Indeed, loving animals as ourselves is considered a "blasphemy against grace."[11]

As a result of scholastic studies concerning the rights of animals, there is another aspect of Catholic thought which qualifies the above conclusion. According to Catholic doctrine, when wanton pain is inflicted on an animal, it is a sin against the divine order.[12]

On the other hand, we have Jonathan Edwards. A. C. McGiffert explains Edwards' view that treatment of animals is legislated by the divine order of things, according to which, it is a sin to show too much love towards animals, because they are on a lower scale of being. Benevolence should be directed toward the Highest Being, God.[13]