

Ethical Idealism

for Humans, Animals, Nature and Cultural goods

- EPQ_HANC -

Assessing the distribution between homocentrism and ecocentrism

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Objectives

Global climate change and loss of biodiversity challenge our high engineered lifestyle. One consequence could be a reorientation of anthropocentric ethics. The study aims on the evaluation of the intrinsic value positions of nature compared to humans in the ethical ideologies of the society.

Proposal

The Ethic Position Questionnaire (EPQ; Forsyth, 1980) assesses relativism and ethical idealism using human dignity as the idealism target. All items of the idealism scale targeting the human dignity were rephrased with regard to the inviolability of animal dignity, nature and cultural goods.

Procedure

The four targets of idealism (HANC) were varied within subjects expanding the German EPQ (Strack & Gennerich 2007).

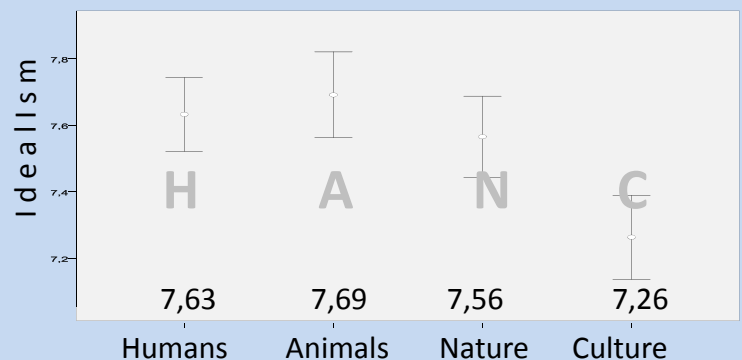
Item examples:

Please indicate your individual agreement.	No, contrary opinion	Yes, fully agree
It's never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
It's never necessary to torture animals.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
It's never necessary to litter the environment.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
It's never necessary to destroy irrecoverable cultural goods.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
One should never psychologically or physically harm another person.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
One should never psychologically or physically torture defenceless animals.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
One should never pollute nor destroy the untouched nature.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
One should never vandalize or destroy an irrecoverable cultural good.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	
Questions of what is ethical for everyone can never be resolved since what is moral or immoral is up to the individual.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨	

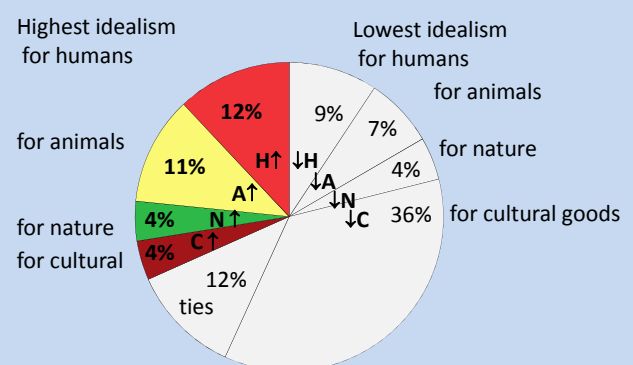
A considerably representative German sample (N= 495) was recruited and online surveyed by Forsa GmbH in Jan./Feb. 2013.

Results

The idealism means suited the target order as mentioned in the acronym HANC, whereas the idealism form humans is not stronger than for animals, $d_w = .08$ or nature, $d_w = .10$.



We discriminate clusters of subjects giving highest priority to humans' dignity (**12%: homocentrics**), to animals (11%), nature (4%) or culture (4%). Other individuals exclude one of the targets from idealism: 9% exclude humans (misanthropist), 7% animals (carnivores), 4% nature and **36% culture (biocentrics)**.



Relativism ($m = 5.72$, $SD = 1.49$) scarcely varied with the target of idealism ($R^2 = 4,5\%$ for the pie chart's 9 groups). But high idealism needs low relativism to signify intrinsic values.

Conclusion

In the ethical ideologies of the German society nature and animals do not rank behind humans. But high idealism for these targets is combined with relativism. Hence, a mere utilitaristic, in Forsyth' terms situationistic, valuation prevails.