

# THE GREAT ELEPHANT INDABA

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# ELEPHANTS' LIVES AND ETHICS

- Management of elephants necessary
- Ethics right and wrong — part of holistic approach: ecology, biodiversity, ethology
- Options of contraception, transportation lesser moral problem.
- Perhaps cost and logistics of dead bodies, but culling would solve problem of elephant overpopulation indeed.
- But - is it morally / ethically right ?

# ONE EXTREME

- Lives of **all** animals untouchable.
- May not be killed
- Sentient and non-sentient animals
- **Several animal activist groups**
- **Animal Liberation Front**
- Tom Regan: **all animals have rights**

# OTHER EXTREME

- No animal life whatsoever has any moral value
- Only human beings moral value and rights
- Taking of any animal life does not exist as problem
- Anatomical, physiological and psychological differences exist, but morally irrelevant
- All animals of all species on same level
- Peter Caruthers, John S Kennedy

# AVOIDING EXTREME POSITIONS

- Emotions and sentiment important but...
- Arguments solely based on emotional premises are bad arguments
- Recent research offer rational middle position
- Ethics on elephants' lives rationally constructed
- No final truth, but beyond arbitrary preferences
- Sound and unsound positions

# RESEARCH ON CONSCIOUSNESS

- Philosophers, animal psychologists, animal ethologists, zoologists, others
- **Hierarchy** - different levels
- **No consciousness** - unicellar life. No moral value except ecological
- **Consciousness but no self- consciousness**
- Rudimentary in **rats, buck, fish, many birds**
- **Self- consciousness** - humans, cetaceans, elephants and “higher” primates
- **Higher modality of existence. “Higher minds” like humans**





# SELF- CONSCIOUSNESS

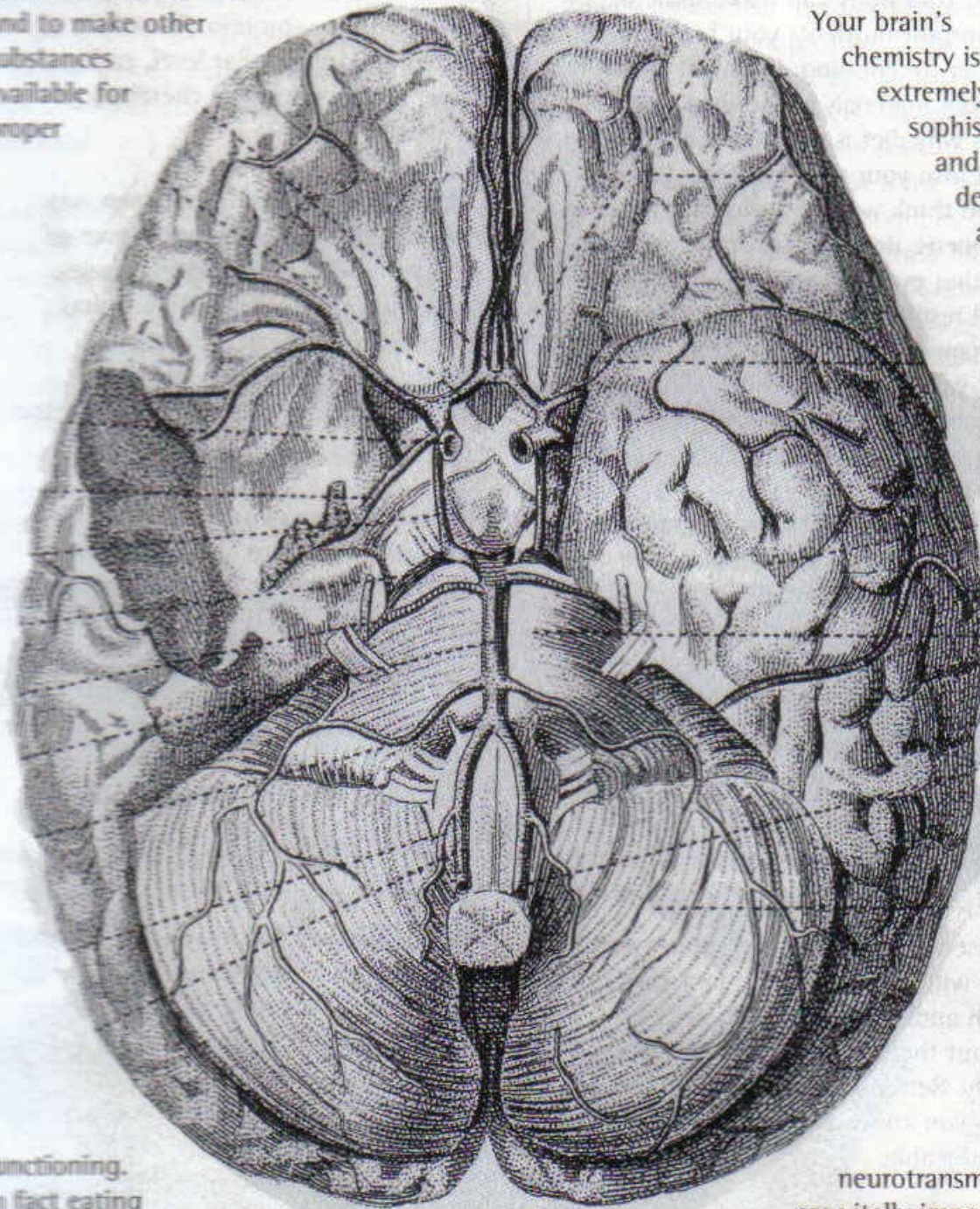
- I am aware, but also aware that I am aware
- Brains match those of humans
- Humans, cetaceans, elephants, “higher” primates
- Prefrontal cortex, size, folds, weight of spinal marrow in proportion to brain

politicim as fuel sources  
and to make other  
substances  
available for  
proper

Your brain's  
chemistry is  
extremely  
sophisticated  
and  
delicate,  
and its

functioning.  
in fact eating

neurotransmitters  
are vitally important



# RATIONALITY

- Humans 50 : 1
  - Cats 5 : 1
  - Cetaceans 40 : 1
  - Elephants 40 : 1 ?
- 
- Vastly more than mere “cleverness”, tricks, mimicking humans
  - Abstract thinking, conceptualization
  - Ethical implications not slight
  - Direct in similar and dissimilar ways
  - Humans advance in science technology

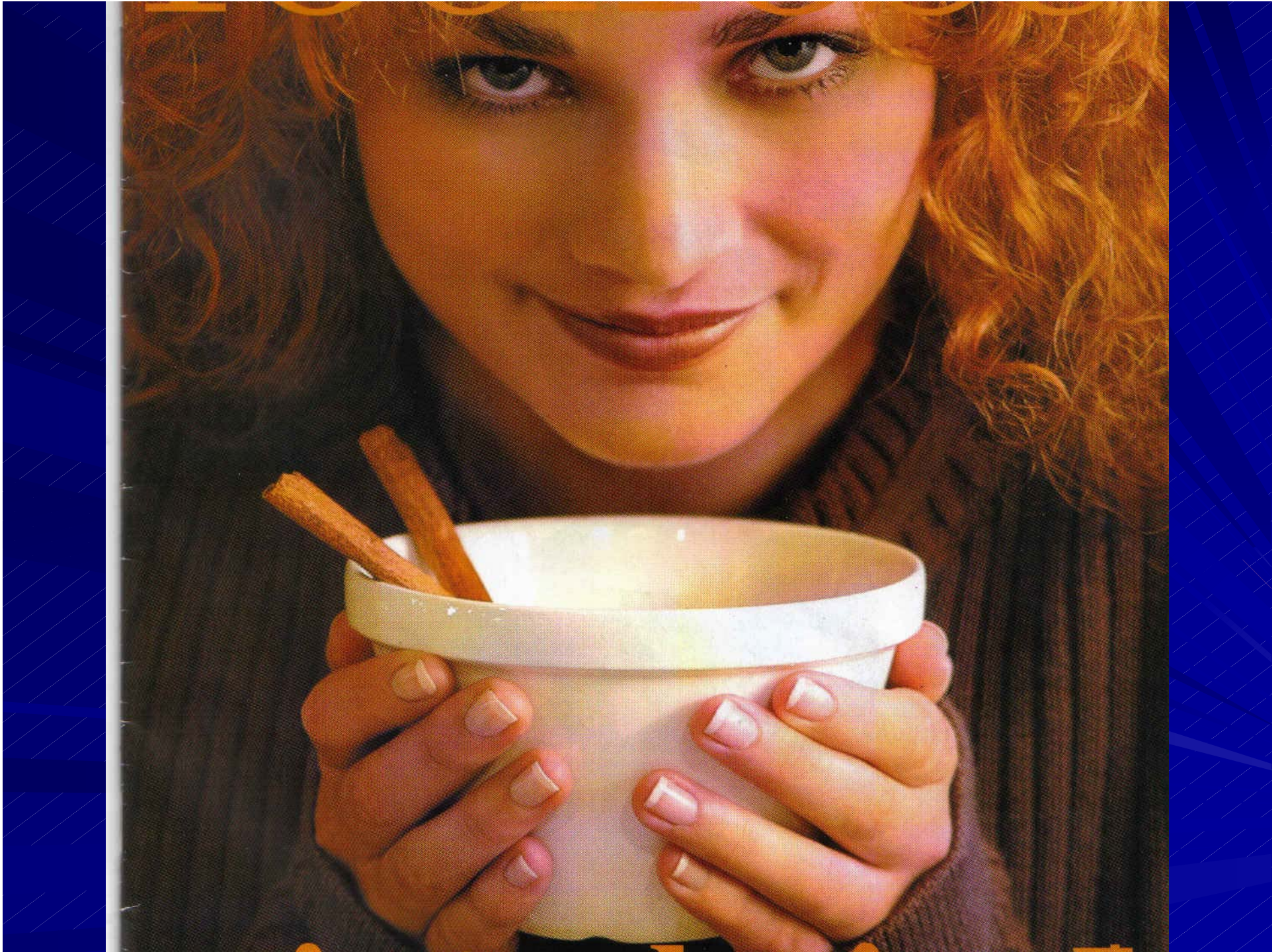
# WHY MORALLY RELEVANT ?

- When only consciousness virtually no future concerns
- No past, and future awareness, because no awareness of a continuing self
- Death and birth cancels each other - replaceable by others - fish large populations
- Killed for food: morally nor serious problem, provided good life, killing humane and painless –
- Unless new evidence. No final truth

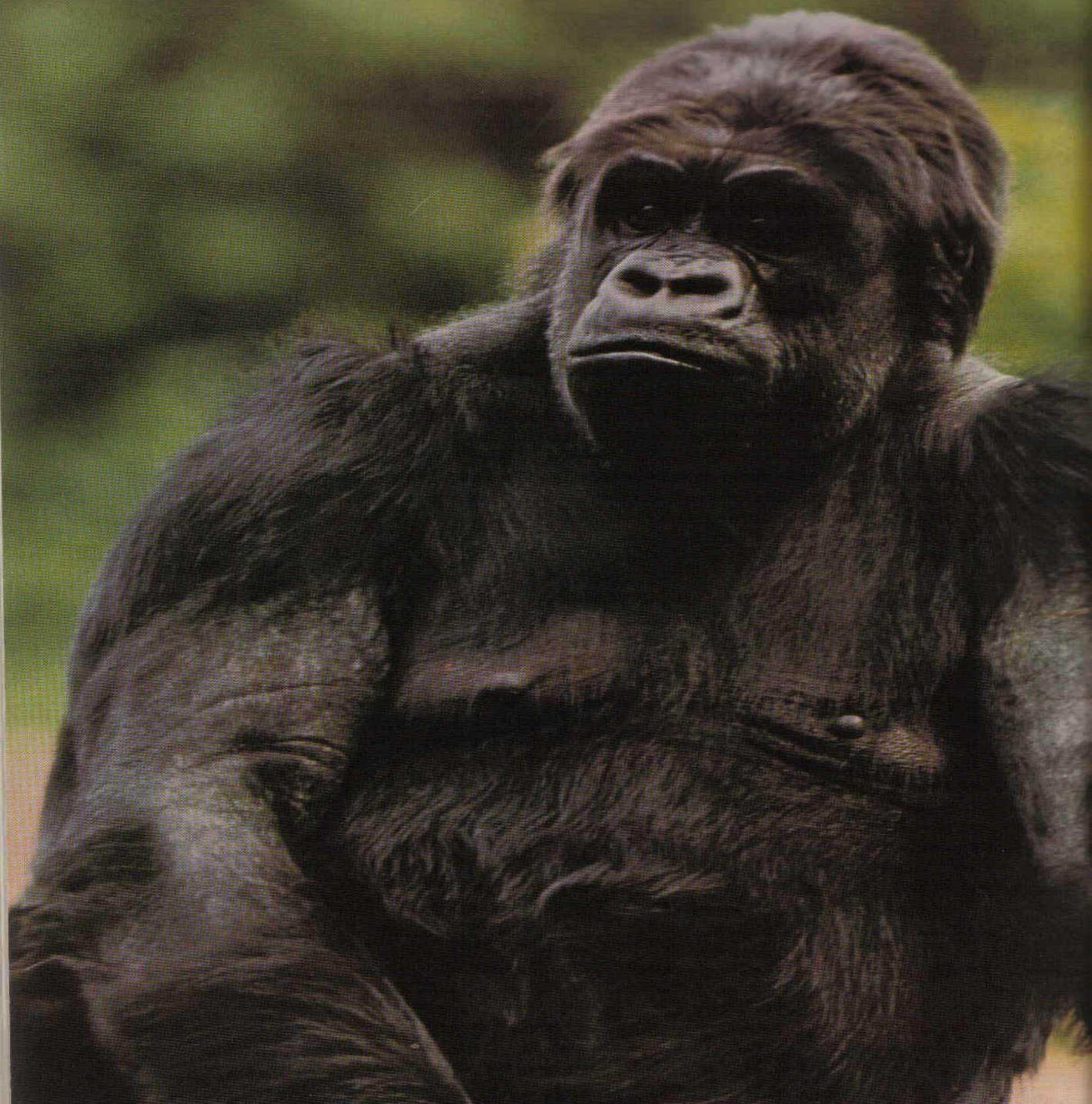
# RELEVANCE

- Self conscious beings like humans and elephants have awareness of past, present and future
- Concept of self existing over time
- Capacity to perceive and consider mental states of others (including other species), for example distress
- Continued living experienced as meaningful
- Death individually and socially traumatic









# Mindful of other minds

- Respond appropriately to distress
- Have conception that own behaviour can be good or bad for others
- See own lives as continuing process
- Identify with what happened in past
- Hopes and anticipations for future
- Self-consciousness intrinsically good-good in itself
- Taking such lives or confine it in cages, morally unacceptable

# ANTHROPOMORPHISM ?

- Solely from human point of view
- Projecting what is human into animal lives ?
- Kennedy animal emotions and minds are mere anthropomorphisms
- No—category confusion
- Anthropological and not anthropomorphism
- Rationally determine common and difference
- Anthropocentric (speciesism) rather problem

# PROOF OF SELF - CONSCIOUSNESS ?

- *Research worldwide*
- Cue independent repeated range of tests confirm hypotheses on self- consciousness and self- recognition
- Several technologies. UK, USA, Japan
- Clear cut hard evidence and not anecdotal
- 2003 — *Clayton, Bussey and Dickenson* confirm many animals have awareness of past and future
- *Bears upon planning daily lives*

# SERIOUS ANALOGIES

- Animals with **nociception** (elephants) experience stress and pleasure in comparable ways than humans
- **Neural mechanisms of nociception in brain of humans and non-humans similar**
- Feedback mechanisms similar
- **Prefrontal cortex and proportion**
- Analogical argument and not anthropomorphism - self consciousness

# ETHICAL APPROACH

- **Hard evidence** self-consciousness confirmed but **resistance to new ideas** - difficult to accept
- Cannot scientifically prove that it is morally wrong to take lives of self conscious animals
- Cannot prove either that it is wrong to take lives of humans
- However - moral relevance nearly self evident
- Strongly favour **compromise** on management... but compromise on lives of self- conscious beings ?

# FROM NORTH OF AFRICA

- Ethical views on animals from the north of Africa
- Prof Workineh Kelbessin -  
Department of Philosophy - University  
of Addis Abeba
- Ethical code as to animals ages old
- Hierarchy killing for food on  
conditions.
- “Higher” animals strict moral code