

## Fiche : Est-ce immoral ?

Naturalistes, éthologues, biologistes ont à plusieurs reprises décrit la difficulté d'accepter un fait ou une théorie dont les conséquences nous apparaissent désagréables. Dans les extraits ci-dessous, trois d'entre eux expriment la nécessité de dépasser cette résistance et d'accepter les résultats des observations pour ce qu'ils sont.

### Le coucou imposteur



Le coucou (et d'autres espèces dont le comportement est dit "parasite") dépose son œuf dans le nid d'autres oiseaux, par exemple dans le nid d'un rouge-gorge. Les œufs de coucou ne diffèrent pas beaucoup dans l'aspect de ceux de l'hôte : le processus de la sélection a favorisé les coucous qui pondent des œufs qui ressemblent à ceux des espèces qu'il parasite.

gizzards, which, like mine, grind, by the help of small gravels and pebbles, what is swallowed. This proceeding of the cuckoo, of dropping its eggs as it were by chance, is such a monstrous outrage on maternal affection, one of the first great dictates of nature ; and such a violence on instinct ; that, had it only been related of a bird in the Brazils, or Peru, it would never have merited our belief. But yet, should it farther appear that this simple bird, when divested of that natural *στοργη* that seems to raise the kind in general above themselves, and inspire them with extraordinary degrees of cunning and address, may be still endued with a more enlarged faculty of discerning what species are suitable and congenerous nursing-mothers for its disregarded eggs and young, and may deposit them only under *their* care, this would be adding wonder to wonder, and instancing, in a fresh manner, that the methods of Providence are not subjected to any mode or rule, but astonish us in new lights, and in various and



Le coucou exploite et manipule son hôte d'une telle manière que ce dernier fait son travail à sa place, avec un coût important en termes d'énergie dépensée pour nourrir le petit d'un autre. Pendant qu'un autre « parent » s'occupe de son petit, le coucou ainsi libéré peut utiliser son temps pour chercher de la nourriture et se reproduire. Chez certaines espèces, le jeune parasite possède des dents à la naissance avec lesquelles il tue les oisillons de l'hôte et devient donc le seul oisillon nourri par ses faux parents. Ou alors, le jeune parasite, encore aveugle et à moitié-nu, évacue du nid œufs et oisillons légitimes.

❖ Voir la vidéo : <https://youtu.be/4Mb0GOITRUU>

## Les fourmis esclavagistes

Les femelles reines des fourmis esclavagistes sortent de leur nid pour en occuper un déjà occupé par une autre espèce – pas n'importe quelle espèce, les esclavagistes choisissent leurs esclaves. Là, elles tuent ou mettent en fuite tous les adultes et attendent que les pupes de l'espèce esclave se développent pour ensuite les mettre à leur service, par un mécanisme basé sur la reconnaissance (ou non reconnaissance) des odeurs. Ce service inclut le fait de conduire des raids dans de nouveaux nids afin de faire de nouveaux esclaves.



Dans *De l'Origine des espèces*, Darwin admet avoir lui-même, au début, hésité à décrire un instinct apparemment si odieux comme étant naturel. Cependant, l'observation attentive du comportement des fourmis de différents nids, dans différentes situations, ainsi que l'observation de la manière dont les fourmis esclavagistes transportent leurs prisonniers du nid de l'espèce esclave au leur, de la capacité des espèces de fourmis esclavagistes à reconnaître les espèces potentiellement esclaves d'autres espèces..., avait convaincu Darwin de l'existence de cet instinct.

« ... I tried to approach the subject in a skeptical frame of mind, as any one may well be excused for doubting the truth of so extraordinary and odious an instinct as that of making slaves. Hence I will give the observations which I have made myself made, in some little detail. I opened fourteen nests of *F. sanguinea*, and found a few slaves in all. Males and fertile females of the slave-species are found only in their own proper communities, and have never been observed in the nests of *F. sanguinea*. The slaves are black and not above half the size of their red masters, so that the contrast in their appearance is very great. When the nest is slightly disturbed, the slaves occasionally come out, and like their masters are much agitated and defend their nest: when the nest is much disturbed and the larvae and pupae are exposed, the slaves work energetically with their masters in carrying them away to a place of safety. Hence, it is clear, that the slaves feel quite at home...

One day I fortunately chanced to witness a migration from one nest to another, and it was a most interesting spectacle to behold the masters carefully carrying, as Huber has described, their slaves in their jaws. Another day my attention was struck by about a score of the slave-makers haunting the same spot, and evidently not in search of food; they approached and were vigorously repulsed by an independent community of the slave species (*F. fusca*); sometimes as many as three of these ants clinging to the legs of the slave-making *F. sanguinea*. The latter ruthlessly killed their small opponents, and carried their dead bodies as food to their nest, twenty-nine yards distant; but they were prevented from getting any pupae to rear as slaves. I then dug up a small parcel of the pupae of *F. fusca* from another nest, and put them down on a bare spot near the place of combat; they were eagerly seized, and carried off by the tyrants, who perhaps fancied that, after all, they had been victorious in their late combat.

(Darwin 1859)

Voir la vidéo :

- ❖ FR <https://youtu.be/CXevDkr4EU0>
- ❖ EN <https://youtu.be/vyGN1CdZg9k>

## Jane Goodall chez les chimpanzés

*The four years from early 1974, when Godi was attacked, until late 1977, when Sniff was killed, were the darkest years in Gombe's history. Not only was an entire community annihilated but, in addition, there were the cannibalistic attacks of Passion and Pom, the gruesome feasting on the flesh of newborn babies. ...*

*The intercommunity violence and the cannibalism that took place at Gombe, however, were newly recorded and those events changed for ever my view of chimpanzee nature. For so many years I had believed that chimpanzees, while showing uncanny similarities to humans in many ways were, by and large, rather 'nicer' than us. Suddenly I found that under certain circumstances they could be just as brutal, that they also had a dark side to their nature. And it hurt. Of course, I had known that chimpanzees fight and wound one another from time to time. I had watched with horror when adult males, all inhibitions lost during the frenzy of a charging display, attacked females, youngsters—even tiny infants who got in their way. But those outbursts, shocking though they were to watch, had almost never resulted in serious injuries. The intercommunity attacks and the cannibalism were a different kind of violence altogether.*

*For several years I struggled to come to terms with this new knowledge. Often when I woke in the night, horrific pictures sprang unbidden to my mind—Satan, cupping his hand below Sniff's chin to drink the blood that welled from a great wound on his face; old Rodolf, usually so benign, standing upright to hurl a four-pound rock at Godi's prostrate body; Jomeo tearing a strip of skin from Dé's thigh; Figan, charging and hitting, again and again, the stricken, quivering body of Goliath, one of his childhood heroes. And, perhaps worst of all, Passion gorging on the flesh of Gilka's baby, her mouth smeared with blood like some grotesque vampire from the legends of childhood.*

*Gradually, however, I learned to accept the new picture.*

Jane Goodall (1990).

Jane Goodall est éthologue et primatologue. Elle est la première à avoir étudié de près des groupes de chimpanzés à l'état sauvage, dans le Parc National du Gombe Stream, en Tanzanie. A 26 Jane Goodall décide d'aller vivre parmi les chimpanzés : elle est motivée par son amour pour les animaux et par l'intérêt scientifique de mieux les comprendre. Dès son arrivée sur le terrain elle assiste à des comportements inattendus : les chimpanzés utilisent des outils, qu'à l'époque on pensait propres à l'Homme. Goodall s'aperçoit aussi rapidement que l'image « pacifiste » des chimpanzés est également fautive : les chimpanzés sont d'abord omnivores et chassent pour la viande. De plus, ils pratiquent certains comportements sociaux dont des formes d'agression qui ne sont pas motivées par la prédation ou la recherche de nourriture. Goodall en est au début choquée, car cela ébranle sa propre image des singes par rapport celle de l'Homme. Elle décrit dans ses écrits autobiographiques la difficulté et la nécessité de dépasser ses préjugés face aux observations.



❖ Voir la vidéo : <https://youtu.be/s0kuMS-EATs>

### Sources :

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