

Sophontic and Nonsophontic Behaviors

In the Bright Way, the soul of a sophont is considered to have three "layers" or "parts". The appetites, passions, or instincts lie at the bottom, and are not unique to sophonts. All animals have instincts. These include primal desires to eat, rest, beget young, avoid danger, defend oneself, acquire resources, and so on. The will lies above the instincts, and is responsible for directing the body to act according to or against them. Above the will is Understanding, or the intellect, which only sophonts possess. Understanding is what allows sophonts to reflect on themselves and the world around them.

Virtue, in the Claravian view, is when understanding enlightens the will, and the will directs the instincts. Virtues are sometimes called "sophontic behaviors". Sin, on the other hand, is when one allows their passions to govern their actions or when one fails to inform the will with the intellect. Sins are sometimes called nonsophontic behaviors.

Just as one must exercise the body to remain physically healthy, one must exercise the soul to remain spiritually healthy. One does this by cultivating virtuous habits such as consuming in moderation, acting with humility toward others, giving generously of one's time and treasure, and so on.

Acts of self denial such as fasting and voluntary poverty are seen as an expression of sapience, making good use of the gift of understanding given by the Uncreated Light.

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