

Part 5, Chapter 50: All God's Creatures

"The way we treat animals is indicative of the way we treat our fellow humans."^{1} Absolutely, John Robbins is right. It's true. Emmale has an aunt that doesn't like dogs or cats. She's not mean—just ignorant. Interestingly, our dogs and cats won't go near her. When my mother was still with us Jake, our dog, would sit on my mother's lap 'protecting' her. If this aunt leaned over to 'hug' my mother, Jake had to be restrained to prevent him from trying to bite her. Animals know. It's an odd paradox, actually, since she's a vegetarian.

It's sad but true that in this country animals are essentially considered to be property, particularly by the court system. It's a policy that is grossly out of date and categorically reflects beliefs based on public ignorance.

Three examples that animals are so much more: Not that I would consider having a pig as a pet, but it's probably safe to say that this woman doesn't eat pork.



^{3} In fact, as John Robbins points out later in his book, pigs are incredibly intelligent and have very well developed social structures—as do cows and chickens too. Chickens are actually quite intelligent and cows are one of the most inoffensive of all creatures.



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In fact, to Hindus, cows are considered sacred. I'm not sure about the sacred part but they certainly do understand nurturing. No civilized person could eat a hamburger in the presence of such a scene.

Albert Schweitzer maintained that "Any religion which is not based on a respect for life is not a true religion. Until he extends his circle of compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace."^{5} Mahatma Gandhi shared a similar perspective: "The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated."^{6}



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The historically assumed position regarding animals is that they are property, essentially 'machines' without rights or feelings or intelligence. Clearly, I don't agree with this. Before my parent's moved to Florida from Wisconsin, my father had dairy cattle. He was very aware that each cow had its own distinct personality—and name. When I was a teenager I took care of ducks that lived on the lake by my parent's house. I can say definitively that they, too, all had very distinctive personalities—and names. Moreover, I've had many pets and not a single one that wasn't, and isn't, quite unique. There is always the question of just how intelligent are animals? I find the following study insightful.

Researchers have done exhaustive studies of animal and human brains. Most of

these studies have been motivated by a desire to find a biological basis for the belief that there is a profound difference between human and animal forms of intelligence.

No cut-and-dried dividing line has emerged. Comparing the “structure and function of the human brain with the brains of other animals,” scientists have found that humans and other animals differ less than is commonly thought.

Surprisingly, the similarities are greater than the differences ... A striking similarity between the human and non-human mammalian brain is seen in the electrical activity patterns of electroencephalograph (EEG) readings. A dog, for example, has the same states of activity as man, its EEG patterns being almost identical in wakefulness, quiet sleep, dreaming, and daydreaming. As for the chemistry of the central nervous and endocrine systems, we know that there is no difference in kind between human and other animals. The biochemistry of physiological and emotional states (of stress and anxiety, for example) differ little between mice and men.^{7}

To my way of thinking, there is no such thing as a ‘dumb’ animal. As discussed earlier in this book, I don’t think it was ever God’s intention for animals to be used as a food source.

We all know, of course, that animals are killed, executed, for food. It’s the law of the jungle. John Robbins knew this too, and didn’t think much about it until he started seriously digging into the subject. He is commended for his courage on many levels, not the least of which was in taking on what he calls “The Great American Food Machine”. THEY didn’t want the rest of us to know what really goes on. Nevertheless, as John Robbins himself put it:

But I’ve learned that the animals used for food in the United States today are not just killed; something else happens to them. And finding out about it has changed me forever. The more I’ve learned, the more I’ve felt that if people knew what really goes on they would make major changes in their food choices [and he’s been proven right]. Major changes that would go a very long way, not only toward improving their own health, but toward reducing the suffering in the world as well.^{8}