

INTRODUCTION

THE ANIMAL QUESTION: THE KEY TO COMING TO TERMS WITH NATURE

By
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What is the Animal Question? The term is shorthand for all of those difficult questions about our views of, and relations with, nonhuman animals. Elements of the Animal Question have been raised at least since classical times, when Plato postulated a theory of reincarnation that “living creatures keep passing into one another.”¹ The ultimate Renaissance man, Leonardo da Vinci, famously said,

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¹ Plato, *Plato IX: Timaeus Critias Cleitophon Menexenus Epistles 253* (G.P. Goold ed., R.G. Bury trans., Harvard U. Press 1989).

"The time will come when men such as I will look upon the murder of animals as they now look upon the murder of men."² Gandhi wrote, "To my mind the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being. I should be unwilling to take the life of a lamb for the sake of the human body."³ More recently, a number of writers have challenged long prevailing views and uses of animals. Peter Singer, in his 1975 book, *Animal Liberation*, argued that "speciesism" is a prejudice like racism or sexism, and to end it, we must look at animals' capacities and interests and give them consideration equal to our own.⁴

In his 1983 book, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Tom Regan argued that animals are "subjects of a life" and, as such, should be afforded some of the basic rights enjoyed by humans.⁵ Steven M. Wise, in his 2000 book, *Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals*, argues that animals who possess autonomy may be entitled to the same "fundamental legal rights to bodily integrity and bodily liberty" universally possessed by humans.⁶ In his 1987 book, *Morals, Reason, and Animals*, S. F. Sapontzis maintained that as humans, we have a moral obligation to liberate animals instead of "continuing routinely to sacrifice their interests for our benefit."⁷ In 2004, Gary Francione argued that animals should be given the fundamental "right not to be treated as our property" so their recognized interest in not suffering can be meaningfully addressed.⁸

Despite the variations in these writers' theories, the animal rights argument boils down to this: Animals have life interests. Science now reveals that animals share many of the capacities of life that we have traditionally assumed to be exclusively human—e.g., they feel pain; they experience fear, joy, and other emotions; they defend themselves. Therefore, animals deserve some of the same rights as humans enjoy—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I accept this animal rights argument, and I take no issue with it. I want to simply add to it a good old-fashioned, selfish, anthropocentric argument: Humans need to consider animals—and the Animal Question—for their own good.

² Michael Tobias, *Voices from the Underground: For the Love of Animals* 66 (Hope Publ. H. 1999).

³ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* 208 (Dover Publications 1983).

⁴ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* 6, 19 (2d ed., N.Y. Rev. 1990) (first edition published in 1975 by New York Review).

⁵ Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* xvi, 243, 329 (2d ed., U. Cal. Press 2004) (first edition published in 1983).

⁶ Steven M. Wise, *Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals* 268 (Perseus Bks. 2000).

⁷ S.F. Sapontzis, *Morals, Reason, and Animals* 90 (1st ed., Temple U. Press 1987).

⁸ Gary L. Francione, *Animals—Property or Persons?* in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions* 108, 125 (Cass R. Sunstein & Martha C. Nussbaum eds., Oxford U. Press 2004).

I. THE NATURE QUESTION

We must start with what intellectuals might call the Nature Question. This is shorthand for about 150 years of discussion about humans' place in nature. Not long after Darwin, thinkers began to question the Judeo-Christian—or Western—tradition of seeing ourselves as apart from and masters over nature. Thomas Huxley, "Darwin's bulldog," published *Man's Place in Nature* only five years after Darwin's landmark book, *On the Origin of Species*, evaluating the theory of evolution and its implication that humans are essentially animals.⁹ Sigmund Freud was among the first of twentieth century thinkers to suggest that human exploitation and control over nature have made man into "a kind of prosthetic God [who] does not feel happy in his Godlike character."¹⁰

Historian Richard Rubenstein believes that the West's sense of mastery over nature was, in itself, a major contributor to the Nazi holocaust.¹¹ His short but powerful book, *The Cunning of History*, argues that the West's monotheistic religion with its nature dominating ethos promotes such detachment from the world that humans are able to mass destroy it and each other with neither emotional nor moral qualms.¹² Our agrarian (Rubenstein calls them Judeo-Christian) cultural traditions set us up to mass destroy life. Rubenstein writes:

When one contrasts the attitude of the savage who cannot leave the battlefield until he performs some kind of appeasement ritual to his slain enemy with the assembly-line manufacture of corpses by the millions at Auschwitz, we get an idea of the enormous religious and cultural distance Western man has traversed in order to create so unique a social and political institution as the death camp.¹³

The ever-rising human population—with its ever-expanding scale of poverty, disease, violence, and environmental destruction—has brought hopelessness to modern society, and many try to relieve this hopelessness with drugs, alcohol, television, spectator sports, and other commercially available distractions. Despite the unprecedented variety of entertainments, which can offer some brief but superficial happiness, there exists, as George B. Leonard says, "[a]n uncommon and persistent malaise [that] afflicts the advanced industrial nations."¹⁴ Leonard says this malaise dates at least from World War I.¹⁵

⁹ Thomas H. Huxley, *Man's Place in Nature* 124–28 (U. Mich. Press 1959); Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (Harvard U. Press 1964).

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* 43 (James Strachey trans., W.W. Norton & Co. 1989).

¹¹ Richard L. Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future* 28–29 (Harper & Row Publishers 1978).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.* at 30.

¹⁴ George B. Leonard, *The Transformation: A Guide to the Inevitable Changes in Humankind* 1 (Delacorte Press 1972).

¹⁵ *Id.*

Twentieth century art, film, and poetry express the feeling that modern life in the high technology civilization is, after all, sad, lonely, meaningless, and seemingly hopeless.¹⁶ "Here is the hidden price of the material surplus," wrote Leonard in *The Transformation*.¹⁷

We have been taught in school that increasing human control of the nonhuman world has brought us leisure and art and culture and freedom from want. We have not been taught that control over nature has also meant an equivalent control over individual human beings. We have not been taught that whatever we have gained in dominance has been paid for with the stultification of consciousness, the atrophy of the senses, the withering away of being.¹⁸

Other writers note the same despair in modern materialist society. Max Horkheimer, the founder of the Frankfurt School of Philosophy, wrote of the "regression of what once was called civilization"¹⁹ and predicted that drug epidemics would plague high-tech society, because life would be so boring.²⁰ Writing in the 1930s, Horkheimer predicted that in the Leisure and Machine Ages, meaning would disappear from the world, and with no spiritual life, people's need for dreams would be met pharmaceutically.²¹

Sigmund Freud probed the twentieth century malaise in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.²² He wrote that humans have a "strange attitude of hostility to civilization"²³ which has been centuries in the making.²⁴ As a result, we are disappointed, and all of our advances have only produced more stress, more threats, and more unhappiness. Much of this discomfort, Freud noted, arises from our sense of control over the rest of the world. "Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that . . . they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety."²⁵

More recently, the late Paul Shepard, a biologist, said much the same in his book, *Nature and Madness*.²⁶ He thought that the problem began thousands of years ago with the rise of the earliest agricultural civilizations when they "fostered a new sense of human mastery and the extirpation of nonhuman life."²⁷ This attitude, Shepard believed,

¹⁶ *Id.* at 33-36.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 60.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 60-61.

¹⁹ Max Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline: Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969* 231 (Michael Shaw trans., Seabury Press 1978).

²⁰ Rudolf J. Siebert, *Horkheimer's Critical Sociology of Religion* 72 (U. Press Am. 1974). Horkheimer founded the Frankfurt School of Philosophy in 1930. *Id.* at ix.

²¹ *Id.* at 72.

²² Freud, *supra* n. 10, at 36.

²³ *Id.* at 37.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.* at 104.

²⁶ Paul Shepard, *Nature and Madness* 3 (Sierra Club Bks. 1982).

²⁷ *Id.*

has had grave consequences for the animal- and nature-informed human mind: "A kind of madness arises from the prevailing nature-conquering, nature-hating and self- and world-denial."²⁸

I must note that of all the thinkers on the Nature Question, Shepard is the most outspoken on the matter of animal domestication. He sees animal domestication as the main culprit for this new sense of human mastery because it has provided powerful models for slavery, exploitation, and monotony of being.²⁹ I agree with Shepard on this. We have exterminated wildlife to make room for genetically modified organisms—GMOs—to feed the billions of cloned and deformed creatures crammed into pork, beef, dairy, and poultry factories worldwide. We have destroyed diversity in the animal world, and in doing so, we have destroyed both our model for existence and our sense of kinship with the rest of life in the world.

II. CALLS FOR AN OVERHAUL

As the fallout from nature domination worsens and social crises intensify globally, many writers are suggesting new directions. When reading through this literature, one is struck by how many writers call for radical (or words to that effect) changes in our Western worldview. These calls are coming from high-ranking political leaders, as well as respected scholars.³⁰

In March 1992, Vaclav Havel, then president of an ethnically divided Czechoslovakia and a former political prisoner, wrote in *The New York Times* about the social and environmental crises that characterize the modern era.³¹ "Man's attitude to the world must be radically changed," concluded Havel.³² Twenty years earlier, California law professor Christopher Stone said as much in a landmark law review article that has since become a pillar of the environmental movement.³³ Stone wrote that we need "a radical new conception of man's relationship to the rest of nature."³⁴ He believed that this new conception could help in relieving human demands on the environment as well as in "making us far better humans."³⁵

²⁸ *Id.* at 4.

²⁹ *Id.* at 38.

³⁰ See e.g. Vaclav Havel, *The End of the Modern Era*, N.Y. Times E15 (Mar. 1, 1992) (theorizing that the fall of the Soviet Union puts man's grasp of objectivity and universality into crisis and demands that humankind rethink its attitude towards the world and its relationship within nature).

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

³³ Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects*, in *Should Trees Have Standing? and Other Essays on Law, Morals and the Environment* 1-47 (Oceana Publications 1996).

³⁴ *Id.* at 38.

³⁵ *Id.*

Another chapter in the bible of modern environmentalism is Lynn White's 1967 essay, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*.³⁶ There, White urged us to rethink fundamentals, suggesting that we "find a new religion, or rethink our old one."³⁷ He proposed "the greatest radical in Christian history since Christ[,] Saint Francis of Assisi," as the "patron saint for ecologists."³⁸

Theologians, too, have called for sweeping changes in our views of nature. J. Barrie Shepherd, author of *Theology for Ecology*, has called for a "totally new attitude" about the world around us.³⁹ Theologian Larry Rasmussen has called for a new ethic—one less anthropocentric and more humble.⁴⁰ Professionals in other fields have offered the same line of thought: Lord Kenneth Clark, the art historian, said of our views of animals and nature: "What is needed is . . . a total change in our attitude of mind."⁴¹ Native American writer Vine Deloria wrote in *God is Red*: "We face an ecological crisis compounded by a spiritual crisis. We need a radical shift in our world outlook."⁴²

The list of famous names and books could go on and on. Many are listed in the bibliography, *A Search for Environmental Ethics*, published in 1980 by the Smithsonian Institution.⁴³ Many of the entries blame Western civilization's secular and religious traditions for society's malformed relations with nature.⁴⁴ In the writings of David Brower, Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner, Rene Dubos, Anne and Paul Ehrlich, Aldo Leopold, John Muir, and Roderick Nash, among other environmentalist writers, the message is the same: Humanity needs fundamental changes in its relationship with nature.⁴⁵

³⁶ Lynn White, Jr., *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, 155 *Science* 1203 (1967).

³⁷ *Id.* at 1206.

³⁸ *Id.* at 1206–07.

³⁹ J. Barrie Shepherd, *Theology for Ecology*, 211 *Catholic World* 172 (1970).

⁴⁰ Mary Anglemyer et al., *A Search for Environmental Ethics: An Initial Bibliography* 81 (Smithsonian Instn. Press 1980).

⁴¹ Kenneth Clark, *Animals and Men: Their Relationship as Reflected in Western Art from Prehistory to the Present Day* 61 (William Morrow & Co. 1977).

⁴² Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red* 287–88 (3d ed., Fulcrum Publ. 2003) (first edition published in 1973 by Grosset & Dunlap).

⁴³ Anglemyer, *supra* n. 40.

⁴⁴ See e.g. *id.* at 13 (synopsizing articles and treatises which discuss church dialogues with technologists and scientists, philosophers' thoughts on human relations with God, and studies of Native American rituals).

⁴⁵ See generally e.g. David Brower, *Wildlands in Our Civilization* (Vail-Ballou Press, Inc. 1964); Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Fortieth Anniversary ed., Houghton Mifflin Co. 2002); Barry Commoner, *Making Peace with the Planet* (N.Y. Press 1992); René Dubos, *So Human an Animal* (Macmillan Publ. Co. 1968); Paul R. Ehrlich & Anne H. Ehrlich, *Healing the Planet: Strategies for Resolving the Environmental Crisis* (Addison-Wesley Publ. Co., Inc. 1991); Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (Oxford U. Press 1949); John Muir, *Nature Writings* (Penguin Bks. USA Inc. 1997); Roderick Frazier Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (U. Wis. Press 1989).

III. ELEPHANTS IN LIVING ROOMS

Not to take anything away from these movers and shakers of conservation and environmentalism, but they halt when they approach the Animal Question—the whole sticky mess of human views toward, relations with, and uses of animals. This part of the Nature Question appears to be off limits to the intellectual pioneers of modern environmentalism. They deal with the Animal Question lightly, and then only from some emotional distance, as, for example, in discussions of biodiversity and endangered species—wherein animals are regarded as just another sort of fungible goods. But they do not grapple with the hard questions: Do animals' recently discovered emotional and social capacities entitle them to some of the legal protections that we lump under the category of "rights"? We know that chimps, bonobos, elephants, and perhaps other species of mammals have sufficient sentience to have a sense of self and individual identity;⁴⁶ should not society recognize this by extending the circle of compassion for individuals to include some degree of rights? Does not current scientific knowledge about animals entitle them to some status greater than that of mere property? Considering what we now know about animals, should we not reconsider our traditional views and uses of them?

As these questions are neither raised nor discussed by the aforesaid environmental leaders, may we infer that they regard this entire line of questioning as unimportant or irrelevant? Do they regard those who address it as emotional, sentimental, misguided—perhaps missing the bigger picture of human relations with the living world? Not to be too snide about it, but it would seem that one's importance as a great thinker on the Nature Question is measured, in part, by how widely one steers away from the Animal Question.

I want to be careful not to belittle Professor Stone's contribution to environmental and legal thought, but I must refer to his famous article in order to show that something major is wrong here.⁴⁷ I will pose this question: How would Professor Stone's article have been received if he had entitled it *Should Chimpanzees Have Standing?* and in it pursued a discussion of the lives of *Pan troglodytes* rather than trees? Would the piece then have become a landmark or a laughingstock? Why is it that Professor Stone and the other thinkers who ponder the Nature Question are much more comfortable in their discussions of the rights of non-sentient trees than of sentient animals? This is a sorry state of affairs in both science and law, for in either discipline, the case for extending legal protections to chimpanzees is far stronger than it is for trees.

⁴⁶ See generally e.g. Jane Goodall, *In the Shadow of Men* (Houghton Mifflin 1971); Joshua M. Plotnik et al., *Self-Recognition in an Asian Elephant*, 103 Procs. Natl. Acad. Sci. 17053 (Nov. 7, 2006).

⁴⁷ Stone, *supra* n. 33.

This mentality is the jumbo elephant in the living rooms of anthropology, psychology, biology, ethics, humanities, religion, jurisprudence, and other disciplines where the Animal Question should be addressed but is not. The tendency is to avoid this question and, where it cannot be avoided, to ridicule it and those who address it.

IV. THE HEART OF THE NATURE QUESTION

It is troublesome that so many otherwise important thinkers and leaders avoid the Animal Question. For me, such avoidance is irresponsible to the point of cowardice. It should be obvious to anyone who can think at all that the Animal Question is at the very heart of the Nature Question. For the human mind—which is the sum of human experience—animals have always been the soul, spirit, and embodiment of the living world.⁴⁸ If we leave out serious discussion of animals from the discussion of our relations with nature, we are excluding the very heart of the discussion. Emotionally, culturally, psychically, symbolically—just about any way you want to measure it—animals are, to the human mind, the most important beings in the living world. Unfortunately, too few understand the importance of animals to the development of both the modern human species *and* the individual human being. The best explanation of this importance is found in Paul Shepard's 1978 book, *Thinking Animals: Animals and the Development of Human Intelligence*.⁴⁹ Our need for animals, Shepard wrote:

is no vague, romantic, or intangible yearning, no simple sop to our loneliness or nostalgia for Paradise. It is as hard and unavoidable as the compounds of our inner chemistry. It is universal but poorly recognized. It is the peculiar way that animals are used in the growth and development of the human person, in those most priceless qualities which we lump together as "mind." It is the role of animal images and forms in the shaping of personality, identity, and social consciousness. Animals are among the first inhabitants of the mind's eye. They are basic to the development of speech and thought. Because of their part in the growth of consciousness, they are inseparable from the series of events in each human life, indispensable to our becoming human in the fullest sense.⁵⁰

I made my own attempt to explain the importance of animals to the human psyche in *An Unnatural Order: Why We Are Destroying the Planet and Each Other*.⁵¹ In my view, animals are fundamental to our worldview; they are central to our sense of existence in this world. We fool ourselves if we try to come to terms with nature—the environment, the living world—without including a serious discussion of the Animal Question.

⁴⁸ Jim Mason, *An Unnatural Order: Why We Are Destroying the Planet and Each Other* 277 (Continuum Publ. Co. 1993) (republished in 2005 by Lantern Books).

⁴⁹ Paul Shepard, *Thinking Animals: Animals and the Development of Human Intelligence* 1–2 (Viking Press 1978).

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 2.

⁵¹ Mason, *supra* n. 48, at 91–117.

We need to pose a question to those who call for “radical” or “fundamental” changes in our worldview and our relations with nature: How radical or fundamental can a change in worldview be if it avoids the matter of animals? How can one effectively resolve the Nature Question if one fails to consider animals who have been seen as embodying the various aspects of vague, formless, chaotic nature in art, folklore, creation stories, and thought across the ages and cultures?⁵² Intellectually, it is either dishonest or cowardly to call for a sweeping overhaul of the West’s nature dominating worldview and then rigidly avoid any discussion of the very heart of that worldview.

V. STEPPING INTO TROUBLESOME WATERS: EXPLORING THE ANIMAL QUESTION

Surely the Animal Question is the thorniest part of the Nature Question, but this is the very reason we have to tackle it. If we avoid it because it is difficult, then we will continue to have a destructive presence in the living world and experience the malaise that goes with it. If, as the leading thinkers suggest, we need to come to much better terms with nature—the living world—we must wade into the Animal Question. The very first step, then, is one of recognition, of seeing how important this question is.

The next step is to identify the cultural and emotional baggage that forces us to avoid the Animal Question. When we step into these waters, what fears and concerns arise? We must identify these fears and concerns and explore them to their sources. When we do, we should see that many of them stem from a kind of prejudice, an attitude of hatred and contempt toward animals. I call this attitude “misothery” (like misogyny). It is very old and deeply embedded in our agrarian Western culture. Misothery evolved as early farming societies domesticated animals and intensified their exploitation; these societies needed new views and ideas to replace the much older, totemic myths about animals as “first beings” and “spirit powers.”⁵³ In other words, early farmers needed new myths to reduce animals from gods to slaves.⁵⁴

So is this misothery at work, ever trying to keep our distance above the “lower” animals? We need to become aware of the misothery in our minds and culture and what it is saying to us as we reconsider our attitudes toward nonhuman beings. Is misothery warning us to avoid a sense of kinship with “lower” animals? Why do we fear that?

⁵² According to author Yi-Fu Tuan, “When people want to express their sense of the force of nature, both in the external world and in themselves, they have found and still do find it natural to use animal images.” *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* 71 (Yale U. Press 1984); see also Joseph Campbell, *The Way of the Animal Powers: Historical Atlas of World Mythology* vol. 1, 8–9 (Summerfield Press 1983) (describing the four main functions of myths and how animals have historically played major, albeit nebulous, roles in mythology).

⁵³ Mason, *supra* n. 48, at 162–66.

⁵⁴ *Id.*

Are we afraid to realize that we have much in common with animals—indeed, that we *are* animals? Do we fear the disintegration of our comforting notions of human uniqueness and supremacy? Do we fear reckoning with the violence and injustice that we do to animals on farms and in laboratories? These are among the fears misothery raises in our minds as we enter the troublesome waters of the Animal Question. If we seek a truly fundamental overhaul of our thinking about the place of humans in the living world, then this cultural and emotional baggage must be opened, and we may have to repack.

Many of our questions will be pragmatic. We wonder: Will we have to quit eating meat and wearing leather? What about medical research for cures for AIDS, cancer, and other terrible diseases? We will have many fears and questions about what we might have to change or give up as we wade into the Animal Question. We need to note these as significant hurdles to our dealing with the Animal Question. We should simply identify them here without addressing them, so that it is possible to move on and look at the gross anatomy of the Animal Question. They may seem like big hurdles at first glance, but they may not seem so big once we have the larger picture in view. When we have it, then we will be better able to reexamine all of the cost-benefit thinking that crops up whenever any use of animals is brought into question.

With these pragmatic questions in hand, then, we take up a round of questions about the questions: Which are realistic? Which are irrational? To what extent are the prevailing worldview's human-centered prejudices and misothery messing up our minds as we try to evaluate these questions? How are we to put our prejudices and cultural traditions aside as we delve into them? How are we to put existing habits and comforts aside and impersonally, objectively explore the Animal Question?

We will encounter fears and questions every step of the way, but we should not let them stop us. It is important to identify them only as possible hurdles, but to not let them be absolute barriers to further exploration and discussion. We must walk a rough and rocky road if we want to get into the Animal Question, the key to the Nature Question.

VI. FOR A BETTER WORLDVIEW, A BETTER HUMAN SPIRIT

There is much more to be gained from this process than simple intellectual honesty and integrity. We human beings need a better, healthier sense of who we are as a species, and of how we ought to carry on here among the other living beings in the world. We need a better, healthier worldview, and with it should come a better, healthier human spirit.

How do we get there? We could start with biological realities—the scientific facts of life, all life—right here on earth. This would help end the miseries of alienation and the malaise discussed above. A scientific view of life—one stripped of misothery and the biases of human supremacy—would keep us grounded in and bonded with the living

world. It would give us a worldview with a sense of kinship and a spirit of living that is truly natural—that is, *of nature*. Humans are one of many species of animals living in this world. We are animals—one evolutionary result among millions of other kinds of animals. Evolution-wise, we are the youngest children of the great family of mammals. It would do us very much good to grow up a bit and learn how to get along with the rest of the family.

Kinship is the biological reality here on earth, yet our Western worldview denies any human kinship to other life. Misothery disconnects us from our evolutionary next of kin; it makes us hate them and have contempt for them. It keeps us above and apart from them. Our human supremacist worldview puts us all alone over the living world, yet insists we are neither from nor live in this world. Our worldview of human exceptionalism gives us a lonely post over loathsome “lower” animals and nature. It enables us to exploit the living world, but in doing so, we suffer a malaise of the human spirit. If we truly want a change of heart in our relations with the living world, then we must go into the thicket of issues that make up the Animal Question.

There is another reason why it would be good for us to address the Animal Question. Our worldview includes views of not only the living world around us, but also views of ourselves as individuals, sexes, races, and people with all kinds of differences. This side of our worldview includes our ideas about human nature and human existence. It includes our ideas about the nature of the human animal—human sexuality, maleness, femaleness, physical differences (as in racial differences), and other physical aspects of life. It includes, as well, our notions about instinct, temperament, and the parts of human behavior we inherit irrespective of culture and learning. Are we by nature aggressive and selfish? Or are we by nature empathetic and social? Or are these extreme ends of a range of possibilities that are shaped by experience and culture?

Notions like these determine our identity as a species, our sense of humanity. They answer the age-old questions: Who are we? What are we? How are we to behave in the world? The aggregate of these notions is the big notion of—again—the human spirit. The human spirit in this sense depends, then, on the various notions of which it is made up, many of which are notions about animality—our own, and that of animals who inform us and give us models. If we continue to see the animal world as we have—that is, full of vicious, oversexed, predatory beasts driven by raw, selfish instinct—then these models will shape our sense of ourselves, our human being. These prejudices, which I have called misothery, will make up the bulk of our notion of the human spirit.

In conclusion, we—specifically, the thinkers and leaders of the modern environmental movement—need to quit avoiding the Animal Question. If, as they say, we very much need a “radical” or “fundamen-

tal" overhaul of our worldview regarding nature,⁵⁵ let us all agree that this overhaul necessarily includes a huge set of ideas about animals and animality. Could we all acknowledge the fears and the cultural baggage and then just forge ahead?

⁵⁵ *Supra* nn. 30-45 and accompanying text.