

# Class of Nonviolence – Lesson Eight

## Animals, My Brethren

by Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz

*The following pages were written in the Concentration Camp Dachau, in the midst of all kinds of cruelties. They were furtively scrawled in a hospital barrack where I stayed during my illness, in a time when Death grasped day by day after us, when we lost twelve thousand within four and a half months.*

Dear Friend:

You asked me why I do not eat meat and you are wondering at the reasons of my behavior. Perhaps you think I took a vow -- some kind of penitence -- denying me all the glorious pleasures of eating meat. You remember juicy steaks, succulent fishes, wonderfully tasted sauces, deliciously smoked ham and thousand wonders prepared out of meat, charming thousands of human palates; certainly you will remember the delicacy of roasted chicken. Now, you see, I am refusing all these pleasures and you think that only penitence, or a solemn vow, a great sacrifice could deny me that manner of enjoying life, induce me to endure a great resignation.

You look astonished, you ask the question: "But why and what for?" And you are wondering that you nearly guessed the very reason. But if I am, now, trying to explain you the very reason in one concise sentence, you will be astonished once more how far your guessing had been from my real motive. Listen to what I have to tell you:

- I refuse to eat animals because I cannot nourish myself by the sufferings and by the death of other creatures. I refuse to do so, because I suffered so painfully myself that I can feel the pains of others by recalling my own sufferings.
- I feel happy, nobody persecutes me; why should I persecute other beings or cause them to be persecuted?
- I feel happy, I am no prisoner, I am free; why should I cause other creatures to be made prisoners and thrown into jail?
- I feel happy, nobody harms me; why should I harm other creatures or have them harmed?
- I feel happy, nobody wounds me; nobody kills me; why should I wound or kill other creatures or cause them to be

wounded or killed for my pleasure and convenience?

- Is it not only too natural that I do not inflict on other creatures the same thing which, I hope and fear, will never be inflicted on me? Would it not be most unfair to do such things for no other purpose than for enjoying a trifling physical pleasure at the expense of others' sufferings, others' deaths?

These creatures are smaller and more helpless than I am, but can you imagine a reasonable man of noble feelings who would like to base on such a difference a claim or right to abuse the weakness and the smallness of others? Don't you think that it is just the bigger, the stronger, the superior's duty to protect the weaker creatures instead of persecuting them, instead of killing them? "*Noblesse oblige*." I want to act in a noble way.

I recall the horrible epoch of inquisition and I am sorry to state that the time of tribunals for heretics has not yet passed by, that day by day, men use to cook in boiling water other creatures which are helplessly given in the hands of their torturers. I am horrified by the idea that such men are civilized people, no rough barbarians, no natives. But in spite of all, they are only primitively civilized, primitively adapted to their cultural environment. The average European, flowing over with highbrow ideas and beautiful speeches, commits all kinds of cruelties, smilingly, not because he is compelled to do so, but because he wants to do so. Not because he lacks the faculty to reflect upon and to realize all the dreadful things they are performing. Oh no! Only because they do not want to see the facts. Otherwise they would be troubled and worried in their pleasures.

It is quite natural what people are telling you. How could they do otherwise? I hear them telling about experiences, about utilities, and I know that they consider certain acts related to slaughtering as unavoidable. Perhaps they succeeded to win you over. I guess that from your letter.

Still, considering the necessities only, one might, perhaps, agree with such people. But is there really such a necessity? The thesis may be

contested. Perhaps there exists still some kind of necessity for such persons who have not yet developed into full conscious personalities.

I am not preaching to them. I am writing this letter to you, to an already awakened individual who rationally controls his impulses, who feels responsible — internally and externally — of his acts, who knows that our supreme court is sitting in our conscience. There is no appellate jurisdiction against it.

Is there any necessity by which a fully self-conscious man can be induced to slaughter? In the affirmative, each individual may have the courage to do it by his own hands. It is, evidently, a miserable kind of cowardice to pay other people to perform the blood-stained job, from which the normal man refrains in horror and dismay. Such servants are given some farthings for their bloody work, and one buys from them the desired parts of the killed animal — if possible prepared in such a way that it does not any more recall the uncomfortable circumstances, nor the animal, nor its being killed, nor the bloodshed.

I think that men will be killed and tortured as long as animals are killed and tortured. So long there will be wars too. Because killing must be trained and perfected on smaller objects, morally and technically.

I see no reason to feel outraged by what others are doing, neither by the great nor by the smaller acts of violence and cruelty. But, I think, it is high time to feel outraged by all the small and great acts of violence and cruelty which we perform ourselves. And because it is much easier to win the smaller battles than the big ones, I think we should try to get over first our own trends towards smaller violence and cruelty, to avoid, or better, to overcome them once and for all. Then the day will come when it will be easy for us to fight and to overcome even the great cruelties. But we are still sleeping, all of us, in habitudes and inherited attitudes. They are like a fat, juicy sauce which helps us to swallow our own cruelties without tasting their bitterness.

I have not the intention to point out with my finger at this and that, at definite persons and definite situations. I think it is much more my duty to stir up my own conscience in smaller matters, to try to understand other people better, to get better and less selfish. Why should it be impossible then to act accordingly with regard to more important issues?

That is the point: I want to grow up into a better world where a higher law grants more happiness, in a new world where God's commandment reigns: You Shall Love Each Other.

*Edgar Kupfer was imprisoned in Dachau concentration camp in 1940. His last 3 years in Dachau he obtained a clerical job in the concentration camp storeroom. This position allowed him to keep a secret diary on stolen scraps of papers and pieces of pencil. He would bury his writings and when Dachau was liberated on April 29, 1945 he collected them again. The "Dachau Diaries" were published in 1956. From his Dachau notes he wrote an essay on vegetarianism which was translated into "immigrant" English. A carbon copy of this 38 page essay is preserved with the original Dachau Diaries in the Special Collection of the Library of the University of Chicago. The following are the excerpts from this essay that were reprinted in the postscript of the book "Radical Vegetarianism" by Mark Mathew Braunstein (1981 Panjandrum Books, Los Angeles, CA).*

# Respect for Animals

## interview with Isaac Bashevis Singer

*Twice a winner of the National Book Award, Isaac Bashevis Singer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978. Singer's enormous popularity and stature in the United States is the more astonishing since his first language—the language in which he thinks and creates—is Yiddish. He once joked that his writing must be 150 percent better than it appears "because you lose 50 percent in the translation." Even though Singer speaks German and Polish and has a good command of English, he prefers to write in Yiddish because he feels that "it has vitamins that other languages haven't got." Consequently, he is the first writer to have received a Nobel Prize who writes in a language for which there is no country.*

*Singer was born July 14th, 1904, in Radzymin, Poland. Both of his grandfathers were rabbis as was his father. It is difficult to imagine more unfavorable auspices for a young novelist than to be forced into exile from his native land at the age of 31 with a gift of eloquence in a language that was becoming extinct. Had anyone suggested in 1935 (the year of Singer's emigration to America) that a Polish refugee, writing in a language silenced by the Holocaust, would receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978, Isaac Singer would have been the first to laugh.*

*How long have you been a vegetarian?*  
I've been a vegetarian for 14 years.

*What do you usually eat in the course of a day?*  
I eat what I like. In the morning I have some skim milk and hardboiled eggs. For lunch I take a sandwich that consists of toast, sliced tomatoes, and cottage cheese. In the evenings, some vegetables. This is mere or less how it goes every day.

*Have you felt better since you became a vegetarian?*  
Since I didn't do it to feel better, I never measure it by that. I feel that I'm right. This is the main thing.

*I once read that it was Spinoza's notion that man can do as he likes to animals which repelled you from eating meat.*

Yes. I don't say that this passage made me a vegetarian, but I felt, when I read it, a great protest. I thought, if we can do to animals whatever we please, why can't another man

come with a theory that we can do to human beings what we please? This did not make me a vegetarian. I was in my mind a vegetarian before—because when I read this I was revolted. And though I love Spinoza and always admired him (and I still do), I did not like this text.

*Many of your own stories treat the subject of vegetarianism. Do you use vegetarian leitmotifs intentionally?*

I would say that of course I never sit down to write a story with this intention, with a vegetarian tendency or morality. I wouldn't preach. I don't believe in messages. But sometimes if you believe in something, it will come out. Whenever I mention animals, I feel there is a great, great injustice in the fact they are treated the way they are.

*I've noticed that you use butchers and slaughtermen to represent evil.*

Well, I'm inclined to do so. If a character's a ruffian, I would make him a butcher—although some of them are very nice people.

*In the story Blood was it your intention to show that people who traffic in animal flesh have something rapacious about them?*

What I wanted to show was that the desire for blood has an affinity with lust.

*In Blood, the female character, Risha, first seduces the ritual slaughterer Reuben, then insists on killing the animals herself. She sets up as a nonkosher butcher, and, as though following a logical progression, finally becomes a . . . She becomes a werewolf.*

*Do humans who eat meat become predators?*  
In shedding blood there is always an element of lust.

*At the beginning of the story, you mentioned that the Cabalists knew that blood and lust are related, and that's why the commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery" immediately follows the injunction against killing.*

Yes, but I feel so myself. There is always an element of sadism in lust and vice versa.

*Do you feel that people who eat meat are just as reprehensible as the slaughterer?*

The people who eat meat are not conscious of the actual slaughter. Those who do the hunting,

the hunters, are, I would say, in the grip of a sexual passion. Those who eat meat share in the guilt, but since they're not conscious of the actual slaughter, they believe it is a natural thing. I would not want to accuse them of inadvertent slaughter. But they are not brought up to believe in compassion.

I would say that it would be better for humanity to stop eating meat and stop torturing these animals. I always say that if we don't stop treating these animals the way we do, we will never have any rest.

I think other people are bothered by meat-eating too, but they say to themselves: "What can I do!" They're afraid that if they stop eating meat they will die from hunger. I've been a vegetarian for so many years—thank God I'm still alive!

*I've also noticed that in **The Slaughterer**, you say that the phylacteries . . .*  
...are made of leather, yes. I'm always conscious of it. Even the Torah is made from hide. And I feel that this somehow is wrong. Then you say, or have the character in **The Slaughterer** say, "Father in heaven, Thou art a slaughterer!"  
Didn't we just have an earthquake in Turkey where thousands of innocent people died? We don't know His mysteries and motivations. But I sometimes feel like praying to a vegetarian god.

*Do you feel that people who eat meat are evil?*  
Well, I wouldn't go so far. I don't want to say this about all the people who eat meat. There were many saints who ate meat, very many wonderful people. I don't want to say evil things about people who eat meat. I only like to say that I'm against it. My vegetarianism is in fact a kind of protest against the laws of nature, because actually the animals would suffer whether we ate them or not. Whatever the case, I am for vegetarianism.

*In previous interviews you have stated that like the Cabalists you feel that this is a fallen world, the worst of possible worlds.*  
This is what the Cabalists believe. I don't know all the worlds. All I can see is that this world is a terrible world.

*Do you think meat-eating contributes to the triumph of evil throughout the world?*  
To me, it is an evil thing—slaughter is an evil thing.

*Do you think the world might be improved if we stopped the slaughter?*  
I think so. At least we should try. I think, as a rule, a vegetarian is not a murderer, he is not a criminal. I believe that a man who becomes a

vegetarian because he has compassion with animals is not going to kill people or be cruel to people. When one becomes a vegetarian it purifies the soul.

*In an interview that you gave to Commentary in the mid-1960s, you mentioned that you were something of a scholar in spiritual matters. Scholar? I wouldn't consider myself a scholar.*

Well, do you think that animal souls also participate in the spiritual world?  
Well, I have no doubt about it. As a matter of fact, I have a great love for animals that don't eat any meat.

*Many of the great poets and philosophers of classical antiquity back with nostalgia on a golden age in which war, murder, and crime were unknown, food was abundant, and everyone was vegetarian. Do you think that if people became vegetarian again they would become better people?*

Yes. According to the Bible, it seems that God did not want people to eat meat. And, in many cases where people became very devout, or very pious, they stopped eating meat and drinking wine. Many vegetarians are anti-alcoholic, although I am not.

I think one loses desire for intoxicants when one becomes a vegetarian it purifies the body. I think it purifies the soul.

*Do you believe in the transmigration of souls?*  
There's no scientific evidence of it, but I personally am inclined to believe in it. According to the Cabalists, when people sin, they become animals in the next life, sometimes ferocious animals, like tigers and snakes. I wouldn't be surprised if it were true.

*Do you believe in the actual manifestations of demons in the physical world?*  
I believe it—yes. I mean, I don't know what they are. I'm sure that if they exist, they are part of nature; but I feel that there are beings that we haven't yet discovered. Just as we discovered only about two hundred years ago the existence of microbes and bacteria, there is no reason why we shouldn't one day discover some other beings. We do not mow everything that goes on around us.

*So you think there are malevolent spirits in the world today?*  
I think there may be such spirits or astral bodies—I don't know what to call them. Since I've never seen them or contacted them, everything I say is just guesswork. But I feel there may be entities of

which we have no inkling. Just the same, they exist and influence our life just as bacteria and microbes did without our knowing it.

*Do you think, on the other hand, that there are benevolent spirits?*

Yes, I do. There is a great possibility of it.

*Do you wear leather and articles of clothing made from animals?*

I try not to, but I can never get the kind of shoes that are not, although I'm going to do something about it. What about you? Do you wear leather shoes?

*No, I don't wear anything that could cost an animal his life.*

Tell me the name of the place where I can get these shoes that you wear.

*I can send you the name of a mail order shoe company where you can get them. Do me a favor and please do.*

*I shall. There's a mail order firm in Patterson, New Jersey - The Haband Co. - which makes shoes of nothing but synthetic leather. They're not to be gotten in stores?*

*You can get them, if you're willing to make a canvass of all the stores - which can be quite time-consuming - and insist upon shoes fashioned entirely from man-made materials. I never wore furs, and I don't want to wear anything made from animals.*

*I just think that is one is vegetarian, one should be consistent. You are absolutely right, 100 percent.*

# A Vegetarian Sourcebook

By Keith Akers

Animals do not want to be killed, of course, but in addition to being killed, they suffer a great deal of pain in the process of being turned into food. Of course, their slaughter itself causes a certain amount of pain (more or less, depending on the method of slaughter used). But the process by which the animals are raised in Western societies also causes suffering. Indeed, given the suffering of many animals' day-to-day life, slaughter itself is practically an act of mercy.

In most Western countries, animals are raised on "factory farms." The treatment animals receive in them is solely connected with price. While it is not necessary to be cruel to animals prior to their slaughter, it does save money.

There is no disagreement about the basic facts concerning the way animals are treated on these factory farms. The nature and types of pain endured by animals in the process of being raised on such farms have been detailed frequently before, most notably in Peter Singer's Animal Liberation. I will spare the reader too many of the grisly details, but will indicate the broad outlines of the issue Singer treats so well in his book.

Crowding is the worst problem. Indeed, it is the main cause of the high mortality rate amount many factory farm animals. Chickens typically lose 10 percent or 15 percent of their population before they ever get to the slaughterhouse. Veal calves suffer a 10 percent mortality in their brief 15 weeks of confinement. It makes more economic sense to crowd the animals together and increase mortality than to pay the money necessary to maintain all of the animals in more humane conditions.

Chickens are probably the most abused animals. Near the end of its 8 or 9-week life, a chicken may have no more space than a sheet of notebook paper to stand on. Laying hens are crowded into cages so small that none can so much as stretch its wings. This inevitably leads to feather-pecking and cannibalism - the chickens attack and even eat each other. Obviously, such chickens are under a great deal of stress.

The manufacturer's response to this is de-beaking - cutting off most or all of the chicken's beak. Of course, this causes severe pain in the chickens, but prevents the cannibalism.

A similar problem arises when pigs are kept in confinement systems. Pigs, under the stress of the factory farm system, bite each other's tails. The solution, of course, is tail-docking, whereby the tail is largely removed.

About 75 percent of all cattle in the industrialized countries spend the last months of their lives in feedlots, where they are fattened for slaughter. Cattle usually have at least some degree of freedom for the first months of their lives, veal calves being the exception. Veal calves are kept in very small stalls, prevented even from turning around, and kept deliberately anemic. They are denied any roughage or iron. The purpose of this is to keep the flesh pale-looking. It has no effect on the nutritional value of the meat (except perhaps to make it less nutritious); it does not even alter the taste. The only effect this cruel diet has is to produce a pale-colored flesh.

Transportation of animals is frequently another traumatic event in the life of any animal destined for slaughter. Cattle may spend one or two days in a truck without any food, water, or heat - which can be terrifying, and even deadly, in winter time. It is not unusual for cattle to lose 9 percent of their body weight while being transported. About 24 hours or so before slaughter, all the animal's food and water is cut off - there is no point in feeding an animal food which won't be digested before it is killed.

The act of slaughter is not necessarily painful. In many slaughterhouses in the United States, animals must be stunned before having their throats slit. After being rendered unconscious, they are bled to death. The animals must experience awful terror in the minutes or hours before they are killed, smelling the blood of those who have gone before. But the moment of death itself need not be painful at all. Unfortunately, not all slaughterhouses utilize such stunning devices. It is probable, in such cases, that an animal bleeds to death while fully conscious.

The fact of death is almost impossible to minimize in most systems which produce animals for food. In our culture, the use of animals for food in any way usually means putting the animals to death. Even dairy cows and laying hens are likely to wind up on someone's soup once they cease producing. Efficient production of milk, eggs, or meat for humans invariably entails substantial suffering for the animals and - sooner or later - death.

The ugly reality of modern factory farms is an open book, and for this reason I have not gone into detail. Peter Singer's comments are worth quoting at this point.

"Killing animals is in itself a troubling act. It has been said that if we had to kill our own meat we would all be vegetarians. There may be exceptions to that general rule, but it is true that most people prefer not to inquire into the killing of the animals they eat. Yet those who, by their purchases, require animals to be killed have no right to be shielded from this or any other aspect of the production of the meat they buy. If it is distasteful for humans to think about, what can it be like for the animals to experience it?"

### **Ethical Significance of these Facts**

Among vegetarians there is certainly no consensus on what ethical system, philosophy, or religion one ought to have. Most ethical vegetarians, though, agree on these two points:

- Animals suffer real pain at the hands of meat producers, both from their horrible living conditions and, in some cases, from the way they are slaughtered; and in no case do animals want to die.
- Animals are our fellow creatures and are entitled to at least some of the same considerations that we extend to our (human) fellow creatures; specifically, not to suffer or be killed unnecessarily.

Very few have seriously attacked the first view, that animals suffer real pain or have real feelings. Some have questioned whether animals suffer quite as much pain as humans do, perhaps because animals (allegedly) cannot foresee events in the same way that humans do. Only one major philosopher, Descartes, is said to have held the extreme view that animals have no feelings whatsoever — that they are automations.

The second issue though, whether animals are our fellow creatures, entitled to those same considerations that we accord other human beings or even pets, is less obvious. This issue requires a more thorough examination.

### **Are Animals Our Fellow Creatures?**

Most people recognize a set of living beings whom they acknowledge to be entitled to a certain amount of consideration of their part. The inhibitions against killing or mistreating one's own family or near relations may very well have a biological basis. Most human beings extend the

idea of a "fellow creature" to other humans of their own race or nationality and often to all humans anywhere. The most logical ethical vegetarian position is that this idea would be extended to include animals as well as humans.

Animals are like us in many ways. They have the senses of sight, taste, touch, smell and hearing. They can communicate, though usually on a more rudimentary level than humans. They experience many of the same emotions that humans do, such as fear or excitement. So why shouldn't animals be considered our fellow creatures?

There are three frequently heard attacks on the idea that animals are our fellow creatures. These kinds of attacks can be summarized as follows:

- Killing for food is natural; "Animals kill other animals. Lions kill zebras, and spiders kill flies. Killing for food is part of nature; it can't be wrong for us to do something, which is natural.
- Animals are significantly different from people, so it's all right to kill animals: "We can only have equal considerations for those who are our equals. Animals are not our equals; they are weaker than we are, and they are not rational. Therefore they are not our fellow creatures, and it can't be wrong to eat them."
- To abstain from killing is absurd: "Plants are living creatures too. Perhaps plants have feelings. If one objects to killing, logically one ought to object to eating all living creatures, and thus ought not to eat plants either."

Let us examine these arguments one by one.

### **Is Killing for Food Natural?**

The first argument, perhaps the most sophisticated, concedes that animals may be in some sense our fellow creatures and that animals suffer real pain. But because of the dictates of nature, it is sometimes all right to kill and eat our fellow creatures; or alternatively, it is all right to eat those of our fellow creatures which, as a species, are naturally food for us.

This is quite an admirable argument. It explains practically everything; why we do not eat each other, except under conditions of unusual stress; why we may kill certain other animals (they are in the order of nature, food for us); even why we should be kind to pets and try to help

miscellaneous wildlife (they are not naturally our food). There are some problems with the idea that an order of nature determines which species are food for us, but an order against eating certain species may vary from culture to culture.

The main problem with this argument is that it does not justify the practice of meat-eating or animal husbandry as we know it today; it justifies hunting. The distinction between hunting and animal husbandry probably seems rather fine to the man in the street, or even to your typical rule-utilitarian moral philosopher. The distinction, however, is obvious to an ecologist. If one defends killing on the grounds that it occurs in nature, then one is defending the practice as it occurs in nature.

When one species of animal preys on another in nature, it only preys on a very small proportion of the total species population. Obviously, the predator species relies on its prey for its continued survival. Therefore, to wipe the prey species out through overhunting would be fatal. In practice, members of such predator species rely on such strategies as territoriality to restrict overhunting, and to insure the continued existence of its food supply.

Moreover, only the weakest members of the prey species are the predator's victims; the feeble, the sick, the lame or the young accidentally separated from the fold. The life of the typical zebra is usually placid, even in lion country. This kind of violence is the exception in nature, not the rule.

As it exists in the wild, hunting is the preying upon of isolated members of any animal herd. Animal husbandry is the nearly complete annihilation of an animal herd. In nature, this kind of slaughter does not exist. The philosopher is free to argue that there is no moral difference between hunting and the slaughter, but he cannot invoke nature as a defense of this idea.

Why are hunters, not butchers, most frequently taken to task by the larger community for their killing of animals? Hunters usually react to such criticism by replying that if hunting is wrong, then meat-eating must be wrong as well. The hunter is certainly right on one point - the larger community is hypocritical to object to hunting when it consumes the flesh of domesticated animals. If any form of meat-eating is justified, it would be meat from hunted animals.

Is hunting wrong? A vegetarian could reply that killing is always wrong and that animals have a right to live. This would seem to have the odd

consequence that it is not only wrong for humans to kill, but that it is wrong for lions to kill zebras, spiders to catch flies, and so on. If animals have a right not to be killed, then they would seem to have a right not to be killed by any species, human or nonhuman.

There are two ways of replying to such an apparent paradox:

- to draw a distinction between necessary and unnecessary killing. Humans have an alternative: they do not have to eat meat. A tiger or wolf, on the other hand, knows no other way. Killing can be justified if only it is necessary, and for humans it is not.
- to accept the challenge, and to agree that the most desirable state of the world is one, in which all killing, even between nonhumans animals, has ceased. Such a world would, perhaps, be like that envisioned by Isaiah in which the wolf would lie down with the lamb...After humans become vegetarians, we can start to work on the wolves.

### **Are Animals Different from People?**

The second argument justifying meat consumption is usually expressed as a sort of reverse social contract theory. Animals are different from people; there is an unbridgeable gulf between humans and animals, which relieves us of the responsibility of treating animals in the same way that we would treat humans.

David Hume argues that because of our great superiority to animals, we cannot regard them as deserving of any kind of justice: "Our intercourse with them could be called society, which supposes a degree of equality, but absolute command on the one side, and servile obedience on the other. Whatever we covet, they must instantly resign: Our permission is the only tenure, by which they hold their possessions...This is plainly the situation of men, with regard to animals."

Society and justice, for Hume, presuppose equality. The problem with this theory is that it justifies too much. Hume himself admits in the next paragraph that civilized Europeans have sometimes, due to their "great superiority", thrown off all restraints of justice in dealing with "barbarous Indians" and that men, in some societies, have reduced women to a similar slavery. Thus, Hume's arguments appear to

justify not only colonialism and sexual discrimination, but probably also racism, infanticide and basically anything one can get away with.

Thomas Aquinas provides a different version of the unbridgeable gulf theory. This time it is the human possession of reason, rather than superior force, that makes us so different from animals. Aquinas states that we have no obligations to animals because we can only have obligations to those with who we can have fellowship. Animals, not being rational, cannot share in our fellowship. Thus, we do not have any duties of charity to animals.

There are two possible responses to this: that the ability to feel, not the ability to reason, is what is ethically relevant; or that animals are not all that different from humans, being more rational than is commonly supposed.

Both of these objections are expressed briefly and succinctly by Jeremy Bentham: "A full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not 'Can they reason?', nor, 'Can they talk?' but 'Can they suffer?'"

The problem is that none of the differences between humans and animals seem to be ethically significant. Animals are just as intelligent and communicative as small children or even some mentally defective humans. If we do not eat small children and mentally defective humans, then what basis do we have for eating animals? Animals certainly have feelings, and are aware of their environment in many significant ways. So while animals may not have all the same qualities that humans do, there would seem to be no basis for totally excluding them from our consideration.

### **Equal Rights for Plants?**

A third argument seeks to reduce ethical vegetarianism to absurdity. If vegetarians object to killing living creatures (it is argued), then logically they should object to killing plants and insects as well as animals. But this is absurd. Therefore, it can't be wrong to kill animals.

Fruitarians take the argument concerning plants quite seriously; they do not eat any food which causes injury or death to either animals or plants. This means, in their view, a diet of those fruits, nuts, and seeds which can be eaten without the destruction of the plant that bears their food.

Finding a theoretically significant line between plants and animals, though, is not particularly difficult. Plants have no evolutionary need to feel pain, and completely lack a central nervous system. Nature does not create pain gratuitously but only when it enables the organism to survive. Animals, being mobile, would benefit from having a sense of pain. Plants would not.

Even if one does not want to become a fruitarian and believes that plants have feelings (against all evidence to the contrary), it does not follow that vegetarianism is absurd. We ought to destroy as few plants as possible. And by raising and eating an animal as food, many more plants are destroyed indirectly by the animal we eat than if we merely ate the plants directly.

What about insects? While there may be reason to kill insects, there is no reason to kill them for food. One distinguishes between the way meat animals are killed for food and the way insects are killed. Insects are killed only when they intrude upon human territory, posing a threat to the comfort, health, or well-being of humans. There is a difference between ridding oneself of intruders and going out of one's way to find and kill something which would otherwise be harmless.

These questions may have a certain fascination for philosophers, but most vegetarians are not bothered by them. For any vegetarian who is not a biological pacifist, there would not seem to be any particular difficulty in distinguishing ethically between insects and plants on one hand, and animals and humans on the other.

# Diet for a New America

By John Robbins

As the sun dawns across North America every morning, the wave of slaughter begins. Each day in the United States nine million chickens, turkeys, pigs, calves and cows meet their deaths at human hands. In the time it takes you to have your lunch, the number of animals killed is equal to the entire population of San Francisco.

In our "civilized" society, the slaughter of innocent animals is not only an accepted practice, it is an established ritual.

We do not usually see ourselves as members of a flesh-eating cult. But all the signs of a cult are there. Many of us are afraid to even consider other diet-style choices, afraid to leave the safety of the group, afraid when there is any evidence that might reveal that the god of animal protein isn't quite all it's cracked up to be. Members of the great American Steak Religion frequently become worried if their family or friends show any signs of disenchantment. A mother may be more worried if her son or daughter becomes a vegetarian than if they take up smoking.

We are deeply conditioned in our attitudes towards meat. We have been taught to believe that our very health depends on it. Many of us believe our social status depends on the quality of our meat and the frequency with which we eat it; and we take it for granted that only someone who "can't afford meat" would do without it. Males have been conditioned to associate meat with their masculinity and quite a few men believe their sexual potency and virility depend on eating meat. Many women have been taught that a "good woman" feeds her man meat.

Our cultural conditioning tells us we must eat meat and at the same time systemically overlooks the basic realities of meat production. We've been indoctrinated so thoroughly that it has become the ocean in which we swim. Our language is so disempowered by euphemisms and clichés, our shared experience so weakened by repression, our common sense so distorted by ignorance, that we can easily be held prisoner by a point of view beneath the threshold of our awareness.

Only yesterday I was in a market which proudly proclaimed their chickens were "fresh." And here all along I had thought they were selling "dead" chickens. I suggested to the manager that he might be able to clear up any confusion on the

matter in the minds of his clientele by changing the sign to read "freshly killed chickens," but he didn't seem overly grateful for my suggestion.

## Piercing the Veil

What, then is it like for someone if, for a moment, he somehow manages to pierce through this veil of repression? Well, it can be downright shocking and can stir up a great deal of confusion and disturbance. Henry S. Salt gives us an account of his experience in his book, *Seventy Years Among Savages*.

"...and then I found myself realizing, with an amazement which time has not diminished, that the "meat" which formed the staple of our diet, and which I was accustomed to regard like bread or fruit, or vegetables - as a mere commodity of the table - was in truth dead flesh the actual flesh and blood of oxen, sheep, and swine, and other animals that were slaughtered in vast numbers."

The meat business depends on our repressing the unpleasant awareness that we are devouring dead bodies. Thus we have refined names like "sweet-breads" for what really are the innards of baby lambs and calves. We have names like "Rocky Mountain Oysters" for something we might not find quite so appealing if we knew what they really were - pig's testicles.

Our very language becomes an instrument of denial. When we look at the body of a dead cow, we call it a "side of beef." When we look at the body of a dead pig, we call it "ham," or "pork." We have been systematically trained not to see anything from the point of view of the animal, or even from a point of view which includes the animal's existence.

In Alexandra Tolstoy's book, *Tolstoy, A Life of My Father*, she tells of a time her aunt came to dinner, and her father chose to burst the bubble of repression by which she kept herself isolated from the truth about her diet:

*"Auntie was fond of food and when she was offered only a vegetarian diet she was indignant, said she could not eat any old filth, and demanded that they give her meat, chicken. The next time she came to dinner she was astonished to find a live chicken tied to her chair and a large knife at her plate."*

*"What's this?" asked Auntie.*

*"You wanted chicken," Tolstoy replied, scarcely restraining his laughter, 'No one of us willing to kill it. Therefore we prepared everything so that you could do it yourself.'*

Apparently, Auntie was appalled at the thought of killing the animal she wished to eat. Like most of us, she did not enjoy being reminded where meat actually comes from. Most of us are willing to eat the flesh of animals, but dislike the sight of their blood, and prefer to think of ourselves, not as killers, but as consumers.

It has often been said that if we had to kill the animals we eat, the number of vegetarians would rise astronomically. To keep us from thinking along such lines, the meat industry does everything it can to help us blank the matter out of our minds.

As a result, most of us know very little about slaughterhouses. If we think about them at all, we probably assume and hope that the animals enjoy a quick and painless death.

"Meat-packing plants" as slaughterhouses are euphemistically called, are not exactly the most pleasant of working environments. Just being surrounded by death and killing takes an incredible toll on a human being.

The turnover rate amount slaughterhouse workers is the highest of any occupation in the country. The Excel Corporation plant in Dodge City, Kansas, for example, had a turnover rate of 43 percent per month in 1980 - the equivalent of a complete turnover of its entire 500-person work force every two and a half months.

One meat producer described a typical meat-packing plant atmosphere:

"Earphone-type sound mufflers help mute the deadening cacophony of high-pressure steam used for cleaning, the clanging of steel on steel as carcasses move down the slaughter line, the whine of the hide and tallow removers, and the snarling of a chain saw used to split carcasses into sides of beef here on the killing-room floor.

"The killing room - is filled with animals, minus their hooves, heads, tails and skins, which dangle down from an overhead track and slowly make their way past the various stations of the various slaughterhouse workers like macabre pinots.

"The animals (have) their throats -slit, and then-with tongues hanging limply out of their mouths-their bodies are unceremoniously hooked behind the tendons of their rear legs and are swung upon into the air onto the overhead track, which moves them through the killing room like bags of clothes on a dry cleaner motorized rack. Once bled, their hooves are clipped off with a gigantic pair of hydraulic pincer. They are then beheaded, skinned--and finally eviscerated."

Amidst this carnage, workers in blood-spattered white coats and helmets are in constant motion, removing cattle legs with electric shears, skinning hides with whirring air knives, disemboweling animals with razor-bladed straight knives. The floors are slick with animal grease and the air is thick with stench.

It is a terribly difficult atmosphere in which to work. According to U.S. Labor Department statistics, the rate of injury in meatpacking houses is the highest of any occupation in the nation. Every year, over 30 percent of packing-house workers suffer on-the-job injuries requiring medical attention.

The same attitudes which determine policies in factory farms govern decisions in slaughterhouses, and these are not attitudes of compassion for the animals. A leading poultry producer discussed the philosophy underlying his endeavors in the trade journal *Poultry World*:

"I am in this business for what I can make out of it. If it pays me to do this or that, I do it and so far as I am concerned that is all there is to say about it."

The industry chooses the cheapest possible methods of killing. They do not purposefully choose to be brutal and sadistic. It just works out that way.

The "captive-bolt pistol" is one of the most effective methods of stunning cow, pigs, and other animals unconscious prior to killing them. Unfortunately, however, the cost of the charges used to fire the thing is enough to deter many slaughterhouses from using it. You must wonder how much money is saved thus, at the cost of forcing the animal to be fully conscious when killed. I've become somewhat accustomed to the industry's callousness, but I was still stunned to learn the savings amount to approximately a single penny an animal.

### **How They Taught Us**

I am sitting in elementary school. The teacher is bringing out a nice-colored chart and telling all us

kids how important it is to eat meat and drink our milk and get lots of protein. I'm listening to her, and looking at the chart which makes it all seem so simple. I believe my teacher, because I sense that she, herself, believes what she is saying. She is sincere. She is a grown-up. Besides, the chart is decorated and fun to look at. It must be true.

Protein, I hear, that's what's important. Protein. Lots of it. And you can only get good quality protein from meat and eggs and dairy products. That's why they make up two of the four "basic food groups" on the chart.

That day at lunch I feel like doing something good for myself and the world, so I spend the 10 cents I have left of my weekly allowance for another carton of milk.

Now I am an adult, and looking back, I know my teacher had all we could handle to keep control of the classroom and teach a few basics. When teaching aids were given to her that helped get the class's attention, and helped ease her burden, she was grateful. Not for a moment did it occur to her to wonder about the political dynamics that lead to the development of those aids. Neither she nor any of us little kids could have imagined that the pretty chart was actually the outcome of extensive political lobbying by the huge meat and dairy conglomerates. Nor could we have imagined the many millions of dollars which had been poured into the campaigns that produced those pretty charts. My teacher believed what she taught us, and never for a moment suspected was she being used to relay industrial propaganda.

Our innocent and captive little minds soaked it all up like sponges. And most of us, as planned, have been willing and unquestioning consumers of vast amounts of meat and dairy products ever since. Even those few of us who have come to experiment with vegetarian diet styles are often still haunted by the voices of our teachers and the lessons of those charts. When things aren't going well, a voice in the back of our minds whispers: "Maybe you aren't getting enough protein."

### **Step Right Up, Step Right Up**

Of course, just because the concept of the "basic four" food groups was promoted by the National Egg Board, the National Dairy Council, and the National Livestock and Meat Board, doesn't mean it is necessarily false. Just because there were hucksters in our classrooms doesn't mean the hucksters lied.

But it does mean their motives were a little less pure than we thought, and their "concern" for our education a little more self-interested than we knew. It might cast a shadow upon the wisdom of unquestioningly accepting the "truths" we were taught. I might mean, for example, that we should consult sources of information less biased than the Egg Board, or the Meat Board, or the others who applied so much political and economic pressure to get those nice pretty charts to say what they wanted them to say.

Roger Williams, the biochemist and nutrient researcher who has probably contributed more to our understanding of biochemical individuality than any scientist alive, suggests that the range of protein needs among people may vary as much as fourfold. Interestingly, a fourfold range is just the span covered by the extremes of current scientific thinking. For if we top off the highest figures to make room for the extra protein needs of the most extreme cases, we have a spectrum ranging from two and a half percent at the low end up to ten percent at the top. Science tells us that the protein needs of the vast majority of people would be easily met within that range.

Nature, it seems, would agree totally. Human mother's milk provides five percent of its calories from protein. Nature seems to be telling us that little babies, whose bodies are growing the fastest they will ever grow in their life, and whose protein needs are therefore at a maximum, are best served by the very modest level of five percent protein.

### **What If We Need a Whole lot?**

But what if we happen to be one of those people whose biochemical individualities are such that we need a whole lot of protein? What if we are at the high end of the spectrum? Don't we need to eat meat in order to get enough? And if not meat, don't we then need eggs or dairy products?

Even in fact, we were at the very top end of the spectrum in terms of our protein needs, needing to derive a full 10 percent of our calories from protein, unless we are trying to live only on fruits and sweet potatoes, vegetarian foodstuffs easily provide for our protein needs. If we ate only brown rice, and if our biochemical individualities required the maximum of protein, then, or course, we would fall a little short. But if we do nothing more than include beans or fresh vegetables to complement the rice, then our protein needs are easily and well satisfied without recourse to any animal products. This is true even in the most extreme case, where our protein needs are at the very highest end of the spectrum.

If we ate nothing but wheat (which is 17 percent protein), or oatmeal (15 percent), or pumpkin (15 percent), we would easily have more than enough protein. If we ate nothing but cabbage (22 percent), we'd have over double the maximum we might need.

In fact, if we ate nothing but the lowly potato (11 percent protein) we would still be getting enough protein. This fact does not mean potatoes are a particularly high protein source. They are not. Almost all plant foods provide more. What it does show, however, is just how low our protein needs really are.

There have been occasions in which people have been forced to satisfy their entire nutritional needs with potatoes and water alone. I wouldn't recommend the idea to anyone, but under deprived circumstances it has been done. Individuals who have lived for lengthy periods under those conditions showed no sign whatsoever of protein deficiency, though other vitamin deficiencies have occurred.

You might think that with the growing wave of evidence indicating saturated fat and cholesterol as killers of more Americans than all the wars in our nation's history combined, the meat, dairy, and egg industries would be hard-pressed to maintain control over our food and nutrition policies. But the cards are stacked. They may not have interests of public health on their side, but their lobbying groups and political action committees are well financed, battle-hardened veterans of political in-fighting. Opposing them are scientists and medical researchers whose skills don't lie in the political sphere, and who have little financial backing compared to what the industries provide their representatives. The fight is far from fair.

"As a rule, scientists and medical researchers make poor players in the complex game of special-interest politics, although they often think otherwise. They are not well endowed with the stamina, patience, and shrewdness that this game requires, and deep down they view it as an anti-intellectual activity beneath their scholarly dignity. Even when organized into illustrious professional groups they shrink from combat and bloodletting. This is more a reflection of the unsuitedness of their training and temperament to the political arena than is a mark of weakness of conviction."

On one side of the battlefield stands a formidable and experienced alliance of meat, egg, and dairy producers, with their purchased political and scientific allies. On the other side stands a

relatively unorganized collection of independent medical researchers, underfinanced public interest and consumer groups, and the handful of political leaders who are willing to endure the sizable risk of an unpopular stance.

In this battle, the industries who sell us foods high in saturated fats and cholesterol have produced multimillion-dollar public relation campaigns, telling us brightly of the "incredible, edible egg," saying that beef is "nutrition you can sink your teeth into," and reassuring us the "milk does a body good." They do not mention that these foods clog our arteries, and promote heart disease and strokes.

Of course no advertising mentions the disadvantages of the products it promotes. But time and time again these industries have drawn the ire of consumer groups, the courts, and medical researchers for their flagrant disregard of fact.

*Stillpoint Publishing, Walpole, NH*

# Diet for a Small Planet

By Frances Moore Lappé

How did you get interested in food? How did you come to write *Diet for a Small Planet*? Countless times I have been asked these questions. Invariably I am frustrated with my answers. I never really get to explain. So, here it is. This is my chance.

I am a classic child of the 1960s. I graduated from a small Quaker college in 1966, a year of extreme anguish for many, and certainly for me: the war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, the War on Poverty. That year was the turning point.

While I had supported the U.S. position on the Vietnam War for years, finally I became too uncomfortable merely accepting the government's word. I set out to discover the facts for myself. Why were we fighting? I read everything I could find on U.S. government policy in Vietnam. Within a few weeks, my world began to turn upside down. I was in shock. I functioned, but in a daze. I had grown up believing my government represented me—my basic ideals. Now I was learning that "my" government was not mine at all.

From that state of shock grew feelings of extreme desperation. Our country seemed in such a terrible state that something had to be done, now, today, or all hope seemed lost. I wanted to work with those who were suffering the most, so I did what people like Tom Hayden suggested. For two years, 1967 and 1968, I worked as a community organizer in Philadelphia with a national nonprofit organization of welfare recipients—the Welfare Rights Organization. Our goal was to ensure that welfare recipients got what they were entitled to by law.

Then, in the spring of 1969, I made the most important decision of my life (next to the decision to have children, that is): I vowed not to do anything to try to "change the world" until I understood why I had chosen one path instead of another, until I understood how my actions could attack the roots of needless suffering.

The first struggle for me and for so many of my friends has been to reconcile our vision of the future with the compromises we must make every day just to survive in our society. If we attempt to be totally "consistent," eschewing all links between ourselves and the exploitative aspects

of our culture, we drive ourselves—and those close to us—nuts! I still remember my annoyance as a friend, sitting with me in a restaurant in the late 1960s, scornfully picked the tiny bits of ham out of her omelet.

Who wants to be around someone so righteous that they make you feel guilty all the time? But while self-righteousness is not very effective in influencing people, this does not mean we should not try to make our personal choices consistent with our political vision. Indeed, this is exactly where we have to begin.

If the solution to needless hunger lies in the redistribution of decision-making power, we much become part of the redistribution. That means exercising to the fullest our power to make choices in our daily life. It means working with other people to force the few who have more power to share it with the majority. It also means preparing ourselves to share responsibility with others in areas that we now leave to unaccountable "experts" and politicians.

All this implies taking ourselves seriously, which for years I found difficult. In part, taking ourselves seriously means taking responsibility for how our individual life choices either sustain our challenge the antidemocratic nature of our society.

**What do we eat?** What we eat links us to every aspect of the economic order. Do we allow ourselves to be victimized by that structure, or do we choose a diet that the earth can sustain and that can best sustain our own bodies?

**Where do we shop?** Do we support the handful of supermarket chains that are tightening their grip over food? In more than a quarter of all U.S. cities, four chains control at least 60 percent of all sales. That tight control means monopoly power and monopoly prices. In 1974 Americans were overcharged \$660 million due to concentration of control by supermarket chains alone. Or do we support the growth of a more democratic alternative, the mushrooming network of consumer- and worker-managed retail food cooperatives, which already have more than three million patrons? Their consumers have much greater influence over what is sold and where the products come from.

**In school, how do we study?** Are we studying to please the professor, or to hone our knowledge to heighten our own power? Are we studying toward a narrow career path, or to prepare ourselves for a life of change?

**How do we try to learn about the world?** Only through the mass media, whose interpretations and choice of stories reinforce the status quo? Or do we seek alternative sources of information that discuss the lessons which we might learn from our counterparts here and abroad?

**Where do we work?** One of the greatest tragedies of our economic system is that few people are able to earn a livelihood and still feel that they are making a meaningful contribution to society. So many jobs produce either weapons of destruction or frivolous nonessentials. Therefore, our struggle is first to find a livelihood that reflects our vision of the world. If that is not possible, then we can do what more and more people are doing—find the least destructive job that pays, and then devote our creative energies to unpaid work. (Some of the volunteers at our Institute have chosen this path.) But just as important are these questions:

**How do we work?** Are we challenging the arbitrary hierarchies that we were taught to accept? Are we struggling to create structures in which responsibilities are shared and accountability is broadened—so that we are accountable not just to one boss but to one another and to ourselves?

Do we work alone (as I tried to do for too many years)? Or do we join with others to learn how to share decision-making power and to experience the excitement of collaborative work? (All the projects I have undertaken in the last six years have involved teamwork, and I'm convinced that the whole is greater than the sum of our individual contributions.)

**How do we choose our friends?** Do we surround ourselves with people who reinforce our habits and assumptions, or do we seek out people who challenge us?

Obviously these are only some of the questions that we must ask ourselves as we become part of the redistribution of power. Every choice we make that consciously aligns our daily life with our vision of a better future makes us more powerful people. We feel less victimized. We gain confidence in ourselves, the more convincing we are to other people.

The less victimized we are by forces outside us, the freer we become. For freedom is not the capacity to do whatever we please; freedom is the capacity to make intelligent choices. This implies knowledge of the consequences of our actions. And that is what this book is all about—gaining the knowledge we need to make choices based upon awareness of the consequences of those choices.

### **Overcoming Hopelessness: Taking Risks**

According to a 1980 Gallup Poll, Americans are more "hope-less" than the people in any other country polled except Britain and India. Fully 56 percent of Americans queried believed the coming year would be worse than the past year. These findings come as no surprise. Hopelessness is a growing American malady. Increasingly, Americans feel alienated from "their" government—witness the lowest voter turnout since 1948 in the Reagan-Carter contest. Americans increasingly perceive that their government operates in the interests of a privileged minority.

This hopelessness is born of the feelings of powerlessness I have been talking about. Consciously working to make our lives more consistent is the first step in attacking the powerlessness that generates despair—but only the first step.

Taking more responsibility for ourselves—and for the impact of our choices in the world—we start changing ourselves. This is the key to overcoming hopelessness. Unless we experience ourselves changing, can we really believe that illiterate peasants in the Philippines, El Salvador, or Chile can change? (After all, they face much greater obstacles and much stronger messages telling them of their own incapacity.)

I, then, believe that "the world" can change depends on changing ourselves, how do we start? I believe there is only way—we must take risks. There is no change without risk. The change, we must push ourselves to do what we thought we were incapable of doing.

### **What Do We Risk?**

**We risk being controversial.** Personally, I hate being controversial! I hate it when people attack my views—or, worse, attack me. I remember burning inside when a well-known university president tried to dismiss my views on U.S. support for the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines. "What does she know?" he said. "She's just a cookbook writer." I was outraged when a speaker sympathetic to agribusiness who

shared the platform with me several years ago in Minneapolis tried to dismiss my positions by suggesting that I was getting personally wealthy from Diet for a Small Planet royalties and therefore was a hypocrite. (Royalties have allowed me to work full-time on food and hunger issues, and have helped pay the bills at the Institute for Food and Development Policy. The money I earned from speeches goes directly to the Institute.) I grew up wanting everyone to like me (preferably, to love me!), but to change myself and to try to change the world, I have to accept that many people will not like me.

**We risk being lonely.** Maybe this is even harder. Changing yourself often means taking independent positions that those closest to you cannot accept. For me, this meant deciding I no longer wanted to be married. At the prospect of being on my own, I experienced the greatest pain and terror I had ever felt. I can't deny that I do feel lonely sometimes, but I came to realize that many of the most important things I wanted to do, I could only do alone. Yes, I do work in a team. I enjoy our meetings, making plans and reacting to each other's work. But when it comes right down to getting the words on the page, it is me and the typewriter. I came to learn also that there is a reward for being alone in order to do what I believe in: I feel connected to others who share my vision, not only to others at the Institute but to a growing network of people throughout the world.

**We risk being wrong.** Taking controversial positions is hard enough, but how do we deal with our fear of being wrong? Part of the answer for me was discovering that those learned academics and government officials—whom I believed—are wrong. They may be mostly correct in their statistics, but how useful are statistics if their questions are the wrong questions? Those "experts" intimidate so many of us and use their graps of trivial detail to avoid asking the important questions. (In Rome in 1974, all the experts were asking, "How can we increase food production?" But I had already learned that many counties were increasing food production faster than their population grew and yet had more hunger than ever.)

In learning not to fear being wrong, I had to accept that to ask the important questions is to ask big questions—and this inevitably entails crossing many disciplines. If you have read our book *Food First*, you know what I mean. The material spans dozens of disciplines, from anthropology to climatology to nutrition to economics. When you ask big questions, it is impossible to be an "expert" in everything that you study. But instead of being paralyzed by that

realization, I try to keep in mind the advice of a wise friend. "If you ask a big question you may get something wrong," Marty Strange told me. "But if you ask a small question—as most narrow academics do—it doesn't matter if you're wrong. Nobody cares!"

My positions have changed as I have learned. In process, I have become more convinced that acting out of sheer emotion, even genuine compassion, is not enough. If we are serious about committing our lives to positive social change, we must always be learning, and accepting the logical consequences of what we learn as a basis for what we do.

Yes, we must be able to risk-risk being controversial, risk being lonely, risk being wrong. Only through risk-taking do we gain the strength we need to take responsibility—and to be part of the redistribution of political and economic power essential for a solution to needless hunger.

### **But How Do We Learn to Take Risks?**

**Few people change alone.** As I have already suggested, we must choose friends and colleagues who will push us to what we thought we could not do. But we must select friends who will "catch" us, too, when we push ourselves too far and need to be supported. Wherever we are, we must not be content to work alone. Only if we experience the possibility and the rewards of shared decision-making in our own lives—in our families, our schools, our community groups, our workplaces—will we believe in the possibility of more just sharing of decision-making in our government and economic structures.

Second, we must learn to associate risk with joy as well as pain. Despite my parents' struggle against racism and McCarthyism through the Unitarian church they founded, the cultural messages were so strong that I grew up believing that the "good life" we all are seeking would be a life without risk-taking. This was my "sailboat" image of the good life. First you work to acquire your sailboat (husband, kids, etc.), then you set your sails, and go off into the sunset. Of course, I assumed that you might have to adjust the sails now and then. But, short of hurricanes, I thought of life as a continuous and relatively riskless journey.

Well, at the age of 37 my view of the good life is different. I discovered that a life without risk is missing the ingredient—joy. If we never risk being afraid, failing, being lonely, we will never experience that joy that comes only from learning that we can change ourselves.

Third, we can gain inspiration from our counterparts around the world whose lives entail risks much greater than ours. But this requires our seeking out alternative news sources, because the mass media rarely show us the courageous struggles of ordinary people. Learning about our counterparts around the world, we'll come to realize that we do not have to start the train moving. It is already moving. In every country where people are suffering, there is resistance. Those who believe in the possibility of genuine democracy are building new forms of human organization. The question for each of us is, how can we board that train, and how can we remove the might obstacles in its way?

But none of what I have presented here makes much sense unless we develop a perspective longer than our lifetimes. Glenn, a volunteer at the Institute, joked with us before he moved to the East Coast. "For a while I considered getting into your line of work—you know, trying to change the world—but I decided against it" he told us. "The problem is that you can go for weeks and not see any change!" We laughed. Glenn was right. It took hundreds and hundreds of years to create the web of assumptions and the unchallenged institutions of exploitation and privilege that people take for granted today. It will take a very long time to create new structures based on different values. But rather than belittling our task, this realization—seeing ourselves as part of a historical process longer than our lifetimes—can be a source of courage.

Years ago I read an interview with I.F. Stone, the journalist who warned Americans about U.S. involvement in Vietnam long before antiwar sentiment became popular. He was asked, "How can you keep working so hard when no one is listening to you?" His answer: "I think that if you expect to see the final results of your work, you simply have not asked a big enough question." I've used Stone's answer I several books and probably too many speeches! For me it sums up an attitude we all must cultivate. I call it the "long-haul perspective."

A book on how our eating relates us to a system that destroys our food resources and deprives many of their right to food would seem, on the surface, to carry a message of guilt and self-denial. But not this book!

I don't think the solution to the tragedy of needless hunger lies in either guilt of self-denial. It lies rather in our own liberation. If we do not understand the world, we are bound to be its victims. But we do not have to be. We can come to see the tragedy of needless hunger as a tool for understanding.

We can discover that our personal and social liberation lies not in freedom from responsibility but in our growing capacity to take on greater responsibility.

# "Terrorists" For Animal Rights

by Colman McCarthy

Police at the United States Capitol put the nation at risk last Sunday. They allowed an estimated 24,000 terrorists to gather for an afternoon rally on the west lawn of the Capitol. The group was an international assembly of citizens working for animal rights, labeled "terrorists" three days before by Louis Sullivan, secretary of health and human services.

Sullivan, a physician who argues with a broadax more than a scalpel, said the "animal right terrorists" coming to the rally were "on the wrong side of morality." On the right side, Sullivan places—besides himself—medical researchers whose lethal experiments on hundreds of millions of animals have been carried out, until lately, with few constraints beyond amiable peer review, if that.

Sullivan's smear is part of an emerging counteroffensive being waged by those agencies or businesses whose grants and profits are animal-based. The secretary mouthed publicly what many researchers in lab coats have been grumbling among themselves for some time: animal right advocates are anti-science fanatics, while we are selfless pursuers of human advancement.

On hand for Sullivan's terrorism speech were several appreciative research organizations as well as some nonmedical slaughterers and tormentors of animals who also see themselves toiling away on behalf of humankind: the American Meat Institute, the National Cattlemen's Association, the National Pork Producers Council, the National Turkey Federation, and the National Broiler Council. A worry arises: If organized protests have lowered fur sales, can meat be next?

In medical research alone, large numbers are involved. The Department of Agriculture reported in 1988 that 140,471 dogs, 42,271 cats, 51,641 primates, 431,457 guinea pigs, 331,945 hamsters, 459,254 rabbits and 178,249 "wild animals" were used experimentally. That figure of 1.6 million animals, which excludes mice and rats, is an annual roll a small fraction of the estimated 10 million creatures killed daily for food in the United States.

Until the 1970s both commercialists and medical researchers killing animals had little reason to be on the defensive. Meat was not only macho but was promoted as necessary for health, and the only people alarmed at animal experimentation were a few antivivisectionists, usually in England.

The 1970s and '80s saw a flow of books and articles on factory farming, a surge of animal rights and vegetarian magazines, and new animal welfare legislation to protect creatures from carriage horses in Central Park to parrots imported from Central America. In 1980 People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals had a membership of six. Now it's 300,000. In the same decade, the Human Society of the United States grew from 160,000 to 963,000 members.

Sullivan's labeling these citizens "terrorists" on the "wrong side of morality" is a squeal of panic desperation. If he had more concern for the health of the public than the health of the medical research and meat industries, he would have skipped the polarizing invective. On animal testing, Sullivan may share the prevailing research opinion that human beings can ethically subject animals to pain that would never be sanctioned for people. But why isn't he raising questions on either the practicality or effectiveness of animal testing? Was it medically necessary for the U.S. Army to pay \$2.1 million to Louisiana State University to shoot 700 cats in the head to learn that the animals had post-trauma breathing problems. Was it medically effective to force primates to inhale tobacco smoke to learn that it caused lung cancer?

These are the equivalents of the Pentagon needing \$600 toilet seats to defend the free world. University and medical researchers have been as artful as military contractors in enriching themselves with grants to discover the miracle vaccine always just one more animal experiment away. Or two more. Or three more.

The barbarity of using animals in painful tests aside, which is where Sullivan and friends prefer it, the objection of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals stands: "Despite the decades of animal research, no one has been cured of heart disease, multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, diabetes, or cancer of the colon, breast, or uterus." Clean drinking water, food, and already available medicine can

prevent nearly all the 60,000 disease-induced deaths that Oxfam reports are occurring daily in the Third World.

Louis Sullivan can keep on with his axings, but too many citizens are being educated on both the ethics and uselessness of killing animals for human benefit, greed, or pleasure. Changes, brought on by animal rights advocates, have come without commercial devastations. Revlon, Avon, and Mary Kay have recently stopped animal testing. Each had been routinely inflicting their chemicals on animals. Revlon now advertises its products as "cruelty-free."

It was terrorism, all right, behind this conversion, the fearful terror of losing money. Revlon lives. So do some animals.