

Between the Species

THE BIRD IN THE CAGE: A GLIMPSE OF MY LIFE

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(Continued from preceding issue)

THE WAR: FIDDLING MY PROFESSION

My education at Virginia was more or less typical of the time. "Analytic philosophy" was the dominant approach to the discipline in places with a heavy British influence, and Virginia's philosophy department certainly had a heavy British influence during my student years. "Animal rights" was



AUTO- BIOGRAPHY

Jim Barter, Animals 4419
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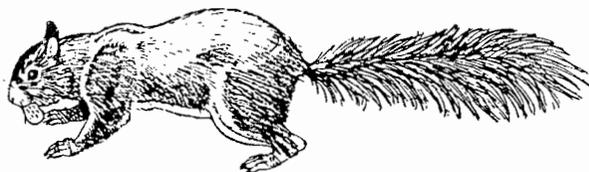
not so much as mentioned. Probably it would have been swept out of the room, if it had been. But neither were abortion, euthanasia, or world hunger. The ruling preoccupation in moral philosophy, which is where my interests naturally led me, concerned questions about the proper analysis of concepts. My spirit bent to conform itself to what my teachers required. I wrote my Master's Thesis on the concept of beauty and my Doctoral Dissertation on the concept of goodness. As a true professional, my concerns were strictly analytic; I inquired into the meaning of the words "good" and "beauty." Not a single judgment about the goodness or beauty of anything fell from my pen. At that time and in that place, it was not the business of a philosopher to take a moral or aesthetic stand on anything. To do so was beneath the intellectual dignity of the profession. I practiced what I heard preached.

After my graduation, when I embarked on my teaching career, my classes in moral philosophy initially mimicked those I had had as a graduate student. But I was never wholly satisfied with this way of doing moral philosophy. What had originally attracted me to the subject were my deep worries over what things are just and unjust, right and wrong, good and bad. And yet, here I was teaching moral philosophy and doing research in the field in ways that required that I set these important questions aside. Perhaps I would have managed to leave them permanently behind me had it not been for a development over which neither I nor any other ordinary person had much control. Before any of us quite realized it, America was at war in Viet Nam, and that fact changed a great deal, including the direction of my own intellectual development.

The dilemma I faced at the time was quite simple. Every evening on the news, I sat and watched people being killed, Americans and Vietnamese, young men the age of most of my students, women and children. And here I was, an educated moral philosopher, worrying about the meaning of the word "rights" and whether there is such a thing as the naturalistic fallacy. I could see myself fiddling with my profession while Viet Nam burned. Something had to give, and since it was beyond my power to stop the war (though I worked politically to help end it), I decided to approach things from the philosophical side. I began to think about how my training as a moral philosopher could be applied to

the questions that were being asked about the war. Ought we to be there? Was the war a just war? Is violence ever justified? Once the logic of these questions took root in my mind, they acquired a life of their own. I was along for the ride-of-ideas, or so it now seems. As strange as it may sound, the immediate ancestor of my views about animal rights was my first crude attempt to come to terms morally with the war in Viet Nam.

If I had to be more precise and to fix a particular time when the ride-of-ideas began in earnest, I would say that it was during the summer of 1972. It was then that I was the beneficiary of a Summer Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. My plan was to think about pacifism, the view that it is always wrong, no matter what the circumstances, to use violence, whether in self-defense or aggressively. The conclusion I reached then, and still hold now, is that



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Now, no one who sets out to think about violence and pacifism can do the work that needs to be done and not read Gandhi--and read him I did, hundreds and hundreds, even thousands of pages of his simple prose. This in itself was remarkable. I have never been an energetic reader. I envy people (my wife Nancy is one of them) who are. I wish that I could be counted among their number, but I cannot. Especially during the past dozen years or so, when I have written more and more, I have been guilty of reading less and less. Except, as I say, in the case of Gandhi. I read him with enormous energy and

dedication. Perhaps it was in part because of what Gandhi was and not only because of what he said that he exercised such an uncommon power over me. This simple, fragile, apparently unsophisticated man, against all the odds and contrary to every sensible expectation, became a major actor on the world's political stage, expressing in his own life the principles of love and justice that he would have a free, independent India express in hers. How extraordinary! Even now, I cannot help feeling that Gandhi was as close to many of the most important moral truths as any mortal is likely to be. The difference is, he managed to live them.

In any event, it was during this particular period, during the summer of 1972, that Gandhi began to raise my consciousness about the place of animals in the moral scheme of things. His views on vegetarianism were both simple and of a piece with his more general views about right conduct. The practice of ahimsa (frequently translated as "non-violence") does not stop at the borders of our species. Morally, we are called upon to minimize our role in the use of violence in the world at large, even when animals are the victims. And since we can lead an active, healthy life without either killing animals ourselves or partaking of the products of the slaughter performed by others, duty requires that we refuse to eat meat. We must be vegetarians. That, in very simple terms, is what Gandhi teaches.

Once I had digested this, I could no longer look at the world in quite the same way. The meat on my plate now had an accusatory voice. It was Gandhi's, and it would not take my history of indifference as an answer.

As a piece of reasoning, Gandhi's argument seemed unassailable. Give him his premises, and you couldn't avoid his conclusion. The problem was that I was not prepared to give him his premises, one of which included his commitment to pacifism, and so I set myself the task of thinking about the moral status of vegetarianism in ways that did not rely on Gandhian pacifism. My first published essay relating to animal rights, "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism," which was published in the Canadian Journal of Philosophy in October, 1975, is the tangible result of the line of reasoning I began to investigate in the summer of 1972 and which I completed early in the summer of 1974. Looking

back at that essay today, I see much in it I would change. I think that the argument goes badly wrong in a number of places and that the style is too plodding. But I like the sense of rational determination and fair-mindedness evident between the lines. The ride-of-ideas had begun; there was no getting off.

I have emphasized the crucial role that Gandhi played in my intellectual moral development. I remind myself of it often. People enter the animal rights movement through many different doors and at very different stages of their lives. In my case, I entered through the door of the written word. Perhaps it was natural, therefore, that my first attempts at making a contribution to the movement would follow the logic of my own beginnings. Up to now, my dominant contribution has taken the form of written work, some of which I have read in a variety of lecture settings, most of which I have simply published. I know first-hand, from my encounter with Gandhi's work, what power the written word can have in some cases, and I am understandably gratified when, as happens more often than I have had any reason to expect, people tell me that my own written work has changed their lives. When this occurs, I feel as if I am passing on some of the light Gandhi gave to me. For those in the movement who are disdainful of "theory" and "philosophy" (and some people in the movement still fit this description), the steadily growing number of people who enter the movement through the door of ideas provides the most compelling answer. In the long run, it is the power of our ideas that will make the most profound and lasting contribution to the cause of justice for animals. Or so I believe.

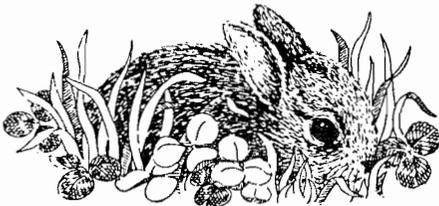
THE DEATH OF A FRIEND: THE IMAGINATION AWAKENS

But there was another event in my life which helped to change it irrevocably, and this one had nothing whatever to do with philosophy or theory. This was an affair of the heart, not the head, and it also took place in that momentous summer of 1972.

Nancy and I, and our two children, Karen and Bryan, who then were one and five respectively, had taken a vacation at the beach. On the very day we returned home, Gleco was killed—hit by a car while darting

across a road. Whether the driver or the person in whose care we left Gleco was at fault will never be known. All that we knew at the time was that a dear friend was dead. Faced with that ugly fact, Nancy and I lapsed into a period of intense, shared grief. For days, we cried at the mere mention or memory of Gleco's name, unable fully to articulate our sense of loss. Earlier that summer, while thinking about Gandhi and pacifism, I had encountered the rude question of the ethics of meat eating. Once severed from any essential connection with pacifism, the rational arguments seemed to be there, I thought. My head had begun to grasp a moral truth that required a change in my behavior. Reason demanded that I become a vegetarian. But it was the death of our dog that awakened my heart. It was that sense of irrecoverable loss that added the power of feeling to the requirements of logic.

What Gleco's death forced upon me was the realization that my emotional attachment to that particular dog was a contingent feature of the world, of my world. Except for a set of circumstances over which I had no control, I would have loved some other dog (Jock, perhaps, or the poor creature at the mercy of the med student I knew), and given some other conditions over which I again had no control, I would never have even known Gleco at all. I understood, in a flash it seemed, that my powerful feelings for this particular dog, for Gleco, had to reach out to include other dogs, Indeed, every other dog. Any stopping point short of every dog was, and had to be, rationally and emotionally arbitrary. And this applied not only to dogs, of course. Wherever in the world of



animals there is a psychology with which to empathize, a personality whose welfare can be affected by what we do (or fail to do), there the feelings of love and compassion, of justice and protection must find a home. From this point forward, my heart and head were one, a union. Philosophical argument can take the heart to the river, but perhaps it is only experience that can make it drink. The intellectual challenge before me was to

try to make this sense of the world less vague and the grounds for accepting it rationally more compelling. That, in general, was the task I set myself and at which I worked more or less continuously during the next ten years of my life.

COMES THE REVOLUTION: CHANGES IN PHILOSOPHY

"The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism" enjoyed a life beyond the usual grave of the professional journal. It was anthologised in a number of different collections of essays for use in courses in contemporary ethical issues. It became part of a trend, one that took discussions of animal rights into philosophy's classrooms. Whereas there was not a single philosophy course in which the idea of animal rights was discussed when "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism" was completed, there now are perhaps a hundred thousand students a year discussing this idea today, just in philosophy. A partial (but certainly not the whole) explanation of this revolutionary change lies in the solid classroom adoptions enjoyed by some of the books in which I have played an editorial role. These include Matters of Life and Death (1980), Earthbound (1982), Just Business (1983), and two books I co-edited with my colleague Donald VanDeVeer, And Justice for All (1982), and Border Crossings (1986). Differ though they do, each of these books includes discussions of animal rights. Their success has helped put "animal rights" in philosophy's classrooms where it belongs.

Along with this change in the presence of animal rights in philosophy courses, philosophers themselves have brought about a significant change in our professional journals. When Peter Singer and I worked on the first edition of Animal Rights and Human Obligations (1976), our problem then was that there was too little good material by philosophers from which to choose. As we work on the revised and expanded, second edition, our problem now is that there is too much. Prestigious journals from around the world have devoted whole issues to discussions of animal rights; these include Philosophy (England), Ethics (USA), Inquiry (Norway), and Etyka (Poland). The rate of increase in professional essays published on animal rights must approximate the extraordinary rate of increase in the number of students

who now discuss the idea. What we have witnessed during this period is nothing less than a revolution in how the idea of animal rights is perceived by a large, growing number of highly competent thinkers. The contribution this has made to the emerging but still fragile image of respectability the animal rights movement currently enjoys is incalculable. Given even the most modest estimate that contribution is enormous. Among the most gratifying things in my life is the knowledge that I have played some role, however small, in making this revolution happen. And this without firing a shot; Gandhi would have approved.

OTHER WORK: SONGS OF MYSELF

In addition to the anthologies in which I served in an editorial capacity, I also kept myself busy in 1972 by writing a number of essays for a largely professional audience. Some of these I was able to collect together in a volume of my papers, All that Dwell Therein: Essays on Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics (1982). Whatever their philosophical shortcomings may be (and they are many), these essays chart the history of my struggle to find and articulate a rights-based understanding of the moral ties that bind us to other animals. The last word is not to be found in any of these papers. Each is a sketch, at best. But each seems to me now to have been an essential step along the way to the view that I was looking for.

That view is set forth in The Case for Animal Rights (1983). This work represents the fruit of more than a decade of hard thinking about the rights of animals. It comes as close as I shall ever come to getting at the deeper truths on which, in my view, the animal rights movement stands or falls. It is a work of serious, methodical

scholarship, written in the language of philosophy, "direct duties," "acquired rights," "utilitarianism," the whole lexicon of academic philosophy. It can be rough going for someone unfamiliar with the field, but I make no apologies for its difficulty. Physics is hard. In my view, moral philosophy is harder. There already were enough books that pretended to make the questions of ethics, including how animals should be treated, easy. A new book, one that did not blink in the face of difficult ideas, was needed--or so I thought. I made every attempt to make the hard ideas I discuss as accessible as

possible, but no amount of effort can make hard ideas easy. On this score, I am especially gratified by the number of people, including the book's toughest reviewers, who have praised The Case for Animal Rights for its exemplary clarity.

The Case for Animal Rights was conceived by me to be, and I continue to hope that it will function as, an intellectual weapon to be used in the cause of animal rights. I wanted to give the lie, once and for all, to all those opponents of animal rights who picture everyone in the movement as strange, silly, overly emotional, irrational, uninformed, and illogical. The Case for Animal Rights is my attempt to ram these accusations down the throats of the uninformed, illogical, careless, irrational, strange, silly, and overly emotional people who make them. Ram them down their throats non-violently, of course; I do retain that much of Gandhi's pacifism.

My view of The Case for Animal Rights's utility is simply this: unless or until the opponents of animal rights have read and understood its arguments and unless and until they have rationally shown that the book's central conclusions are defective, they do not have a rational leg to stand on. They speak without knowledge. They utter words without understanding. The demand should go out, at least for the present, that the exploiters of animals answer The Case for Animal Rights. I harbor the hope that they will lack the ability to do so, which is why I want the weapon used. It can be lethal. It pleases me to see that some people are beginning to recognize the range of the book's possible uses and its potential power.

I also am pleased, for different reasons, to see the increasing number of people who are beginning to recognize how my views differ fundamentally from Peter Singer's. As early as 1978, Singer denied, in print, that animals have rights. He even apologized for using the expression "animal rights" in his earlier writings, confessing that the use of this expression was nothing more than a "concession to popular rhetoric," something he said he "regretted." No one, it seems, paid attention. "Animal rights" and "Peter Singer" became synonymous ideas in the minds of many people, even people in the animal rights movement. I cannot begin to count the number of times I have sat through discussions or read essays in which my views regarding the

rights of animals were attributed, not to me, but to Singer. I would be less than honest if I said that this never bothered me. It has, often, and a lot. But I have tried to hold my tongue and to acquire the virtue of patience--never easy for an Irishman! What pleases me now is that more and more people are beginning to recognize that the views they accept and want to see defended--tough-minded views about animal rights--are to be found in my work, not in Singer's. Intellectually and personally, fewer things give me greater satisfaction. I want nothing more for my ideas than what they are due, but I also want nothing less.

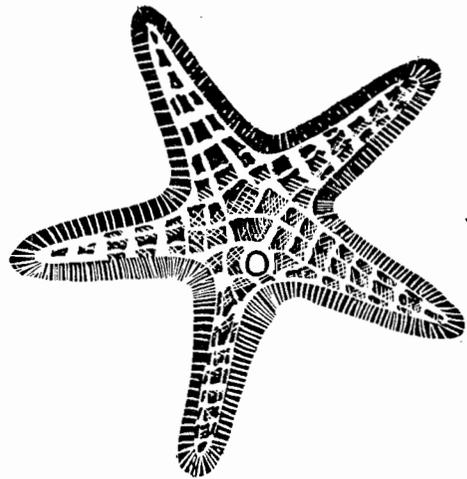
LIBERATION: OUT FROM UNDER THE NEED TO SAY MORE

The process of writing The Case for Animal Rights was remarkable. I worked as many as eighteen hours a day for almost a full year, during which time I again was the fortunate recipient of a Fellowship from the national Endowment for the Humanities. I am a compulsive rewriter. I doubt if there is a single sentence in The Case for Animal Rights that wasn't recast at least once, maybe even twice. Physically, the work was exhausting. Psychologically, it was invigorating. I never was tempted to abandon the project. Once under way, I never varied from course. I was never depressed or displeased about how the book was going. Each day was too short, not too long. I was absolutely filled with, and by, the process of writing. I came away from my year's work on the book with the conviction that I have the temperament of a writer. Whether I have any of the necessary skills is another issue. How lucky those people are who are able to make an adequate living at this craft! How courageous are those who try!

There is another point about the process of writing The Case for Animal Rights that I should mention. When I started the book, I did not hold the "radical" conclusions I reach in the final chapter. At the beginning, I was against causing animals "unnecessary" suffering in scientific research, for example, but I was not against causing them "necessary" pain. Like Singer now, I was not an abolitionist then. What was perhaps the most remarkable, exciting part of working on The Case for Animal Rights was how I was led by the force of reasons I had never before considered to embrace positions which I had

never before accepted, including the abolitionist one. The power of ideas, not my own will, was in control, it seemed to me. I genuinely felt as if a part of Truth was being revealed to me for the first time. Of course, I do not want to claim that anything like this really happened. Here I am only describing how I experienced things, and how I experienced them, especially towards the end of the composition of the book, was qualitatively unlike anything else I have ever experienced. It was intoxicating. It was as close to anything like a sustained religious or spiritual revelation as I have ever experienced, or am ever likely to experience again. Perhaps Reverend Fackler was closer to the truth than I have suspected.

The publication of The Case for Animal Rights marked the end of one phase of my life and the beginning of several others. Having gotten the book out of my system, I was liberated from the need to write anything else of a technical nature about animal rights. That work is done, behind me. With only a few possible exceptions, whatever other written contributions I may make to the movement will be different. Before The Case for Animals Rights, my audience consisted largely of my peers in philosophy. In future, it normally will be the public. A simple, undemanding book on animal rights is the next big project I am likely to undertake. I am eager to get on with it.



NO TIME FOR REST:

NEW BEGINNINGS

This newly acquired freedom from the need to do technical philosophy has allowed me to strike out in a variety of new directions. During the academic year 1984-5, I

had the great good fortune to be a Fellow at the National Humanities Center, a beneficiary for a third time of funds from the national Endowment for the Humanities. This time, I wrote a book on the English philosopher George Edward Moore. This book doesn't so much as mention the word "animal." It is a contribution to intellectual history. Without my saying so, the book makes it clear that Tom Regan, the philosopher, is in a new line of business.

I worked no less hard on this book than I did on The Case for Animal Rights, and I enjoyed the process of writing (and re-writing!) just as much. I wanted to write a book about a philosopher that was unlike any other book ever written about a philosopher, just as I had previously wanted to write a book about animal rights that was similarly unique. I think my book about Moore is unique in the ways I hoped it would be. Whether others think it is a really good book remains to be seen. I like it tremendously myself. After a year's hard work with a book, you and it become good friends.

This new path I am exploring as a scholar does not mean that I have abandoned academic and other work that relates to the animal rights movement. On the contrary, my involvement increases steadily, so much so that my life as a creative scholar in other areas runs the risk of becoming something of a hobby. My solution to this problem at this time is to do more editorial work. Temple University Press has asked me to be the general editor of a series of scholarly books in moral philosophy, and I have also agreed to be the general editor of a fourteen volume series of college texts for Random House. Work on these two projects should be enough to keep me off the streets at night for the foreseeable future. I don't think I'll run out of things to do in my capacity as a scholar outside the field of animal rights.

As important as these projects are, the new steps I am taking in relation to the movement are even more so. One question those in the movement must ask themselves everyday is, "How do we attract new people to the cause?" My answer is that we must try to reach new or neglected constituencies. And there is no question in my mind that one of the most neglected constituencies is religion, both institutional and academic. In the past three years or so, I have begun to try to help correct this oversight, and so

have others. There is another revolution coming, and it's going to be a big one.

An early sign of change was the July, 1984, conference, which I was invited to help organize and chair, on Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science, sponsored by the International Association Against Painful Experiments on Animals. The proceedings of this conference will be published under my editorship by Temple University Press in 1986. The title will be Animal Sacrifices. That will be a first step in the process of getting animal rights into religion's classrooms and journals. A second step will be the publication of a collection of readings (The Place of Animals in the Christian Faith) on which Andrew Linzey and I currently are at work. When this anthology becomes available, it will help generate the kind of change in academic religion that the publication of Animal Rights and Human Obligations helped make possible in the case of academic philosophy ten years ago.

But animal rights must get a fair hearing in our places of worship, not only in our classrooms and professional quarterlies in religion. Toward that end, I am presently at work on a film ("We Are All Noah") that will be made available for use in Sunday School classes, discussion groups, and the like in both the Christian and Jewish religious communities. Priests, rabbis, ministers, and interested lay people appear in the film and have helped in other ways. People inside the families of religion, not "animal crazies" outside them, will show what factory farming is and explain why a conscientious religious person cannot ignore this brutal exploitation of God's creatures any longer. The same theme will be played in the case of the use of animals in science, of hunting and trapping, and of pet abuse. When "We Are All Noah" is available the animal rights movement finally will have an appropriate vehicle for raising the animal rights issue in houses of worship. How do we attract new people to the movement? Animal Sacrifices, The Place of Animals in the Christian Faith, and "We Are All Noah" are among my ways of trying to answer this question in the case of religion. Other people are offering other answers. The cumulative effect of the efforts of many will rouse that sleeping giant, religion, and the movement will never be the same.

But we must not stop here. The movement

must reach out to other neglected constituencies and find new ways of raising the public's consciousness. We ourselves must become more aware of the deep cultural roots the movement has--in philosophy and poetry, art and sculpture, music and dance. We must add to this body of cultural resources in ways that will help educate the public both about the plight of the animals for whom we labor and about the character of those of us who labor for them.

The need to move on these fronts is what underlies the formation of The Culture and Animals Foundation (CAF), a non-profit organization that will raise and distribute money to fund three programs:

1. The Research Program. CAF will fund selected research in the arts and humanities which promises to add significantly to our knowledge of artists and thinkers whose work expresses positive concern for animals.

2. The Creativity Program. CAF will fund creative endeavors by contemporary artists and scholars in the humanities whose work is or will be expressive of positive concern for animals.

3. The Performance Program. CAF will organize and fund, at its discretion and subject to available monies and material, the performance and exhibition of artistic works and the presentation of the fruits of humanistic scholarship that have been funded by The Research or The Creativity Programs.

Except for normal operating expenses, CAF will not allocate any of its funds for purposes other than those described above.

The board of CAF is deliberately small. Dean John Bowker of Trinity College, Cambridge University, is Vice President, Carol Aycock, former Director of the History of Theater Programs, Wake Forest University, is Secretary-Treasurer. I currently serve as President. I have never been so much as an official member of an animal organization, let alone an officer of one. I have valued my independence, never wanting to be a part of the political divisiveness that has sometimes characterized the movement. That I would create CAF says something about how crucially important I believe its role in the movement is.

It is too early to say if CAF will

succeed. We do know this, however: the work of scholars in philosophy has revolutionized the seriousness of animal rights in that discipline's journals and classrooms. That mood of seriousness has flowed beyond these rooms and pages to the world outside. There is no reason why the same thing cannot happen in other areas--in literature and legal theory, in painting and dance, in religion and music. CAF will help make this change possible, and it will accelerate the movement's rate of growth. We need to take charge of these things ourselves, not wait for others to do this for us. Because of the support of the national Endowment for the Humanities and my university, North Carolina State University, I have been one of the very few lucky ones who have had the necessary financial support to do the kind of scholarly work that is essential, if the movement is to go forward. CAF will see to it that many more scholars and artists receive the support they deserve. Their work will speak to neglected constituencies and help change the image of the movement. For we are the voice of what is best in our culture. It is time the public found this out.

INTO THE BREACH:

RADICALIZING THE MOVEMENT

Of late, I have begun to take a few other steps to help add to the movement's strength. I believe that the campuses of America's colleges and universities are a neglected constituency. I think that they are ready to be "radicalized" in ways that remind one of the "student unrest" of the sixties. Our students today suffer from pent-up idealism. They want and need to be a part of something good, and this good thing will be better, in their view, if it is something their parents did not champion before them. The present generation of students wants and needs a new cause, their cause. I sense this in my daughter Karen and my son Bryan and in their friends. They are waiting for the right cause to capture their abundant energy and imagination. I have no doubt that we can help them choose the cause of animal rights. I have lent my hand to early efforts to get this process started. I shall do more in the future.

Mention of student unrest in the sixties harkens back to the Viet Nam War, and that, in turn, calls up the name of Gandhi and non-violent means of protest: boycotts, sit-ins,

and the like. I believe that the time has come for the animal rights movement to go the route of every other successful movement for social justice. Our problem is not that we have too many non-violent animal activists who are willing to go to jail in the name of animal rights; our problem is that we have too few. People in leadership roles in the movement must take the initiative and "radicalize" others by becoming civil disobedients themselves. True to my Gandhian lineage, I encourage principled reliance on non-violence--which does not mean inaction. (When I joined the other civil disobedients in the peaceful and successful occupation at NIH in June, 1985, I certainly did not think that I was doing nothing!) The day may come when we are able to fill the jails with morally conscientious animal activists who care enough to practice civil disobedience. I hope so. The movement is unlikely to triumph, if that day never dawns.

Other major constituencies cry out for attention. The animal rights movement is only one part of the larger movement for social justice. It must begin to align itself with other parts, with the peace move-



ment, for example, and the Greens, with organizations trying to find missing children and those working to help battered wives, and with still other groups who labor for justice for East Asians, Blacks, Chicanos, and other minorities. Representatives of these and other groups must be a part of our movement's campaigns and rallies. The same is true of the working class. I am a product of that class and have deep loyalties and affection for those who comprise it. The movement must learn how to reach out to those decent men and women. Although I myself am making a major effort on the cultural front through CAF's programs, I do not think that the animal rights movement will be a truly powerful political force until we have labor marching with us. I hope to start the process of blue collar involvement, soon. There is so much to do, and so little time to do it. The future awaits.

NATURE REBELS:

understanding weakness

Probably everyone who reflects on the life he or she has led up to a given time is struck by how chancey it all seems. Consider my case. Suppose my family had never moved from Pittsburgh's North Side, would I have gone to college? That's very unlikely. But even if I had, would I have gone to Thiel College? That's more unlikely still. And that means that in all probability I would not have met either Bob Bryan or my wife. How very unlikely, then, that I would have gone to the University of Virginia to study philosophy or grown into the person who wrote The Case for Animal Rights and is now thinking of ways to create new points of entry into the movement for animal rights. I can never think of my past without being overwhelmed by how much of what has happened to me (and this includes the very best things) was due to factors quite beyond my control. I try to remember this when I meet people whose ideas and values differ significantly from my own. "There, but for a series of contingencies, go I," I think. This helps me in my battle against self-righteousness and in my efforts to be patient with people who are just entering the movement, as well as with those who are currently outside it. How little of what we are and what we will become is within our power to control.

So it is that I look back uncertainly at that self I once was. I see the boy playing on Pittsburgh's streets, unmindful of the aged, mistreated mare pulling an overloaded wagon of junk and old iron, the master's whip whistling angrily over her weary head. I watch the teenager running his hands over a butchered side of beef without giving it a second thought. And I observe the aspirant Virginia Gentleman listening indifferently to another's moral anguish concerning a solitary dog used in practice surgery, his own mind preoccupied with loftier worries about Plato's theory of forms. In every case I wonder, not superficially but down to the very depths of my being, if there is not the slightest hint, the most miniscule portent, of what my future was to be, of where my thought would and must lead me. Is it all a matter of luck, of chance, of accident? Was there nothing of me that directed my growth from within?

There is, perhaps, one hint of my desti-

ny all but hidden in the blur of my boyhood memories. I was born with what has come to be called a "lazy" or "weak eye." Other names for my condition are "cock-eyed" and "cross-eyed." It is not a condition a boy could easily ignore. Others, especially one's antagonists, delight in reminding one of the defect. I am told that some Native American peoples viewed crossed eyes as positively beautiful and thought that anyone who was blessed with this condition must be very special to the gods. I do not know whether this is true. I do know that it was not part of the oral traditions current on the streets of Pittsburgh during my youth. I was terribly self-conscious and wore my glasses constantly. This merited the name "four eyes," which, though not a confidence booster in its own right, was less devastating than "cock-eyed!" Corrective surgery, which is now routine for very young children with a lazy eye, was not in vogue back then. What was recommended were exercises, and these were done with the aid of a mechanical device at the ophthalmologist's office. So, off I would go every now and again to try to strengthen my weak eye.

The device was constructed as follows. If you looked through the right lens, you saw a bird, and if you looked through the left



lens, you saw a cage. People with normal eyes who looked through both lenses at the same time saw the cage imposed on the bird, which gave the appearance that the bird was in the cage. I saw things differently. In my case, because of my weak left eye, the bird always appeared to the right and slightly below the cage. Sometimes, when I concentrated as hard as I could, the bird seemed to move closer to the cage. But, try as I might, I never could get the thing right; I never could see the bird in the cage.

Today, thinking back on what at the time appeared to be a serious failure on my part, I glimpse the one deeply mysterious suggestion of where I was headed with my life, the one possible portent of what I would, and must, become and do. Try as I might, my nature would not permit me to see the bird in the cage. Something in me rebelled against having things in this way. Others saw the bird as captive. I could only see the bird as free. And that, in its way, is a prophetic metaphor of what I have become.

My fate, one might say, is to help others to see animals in a different way, as creatures who do not belong in cages, or in leghold traps, or in skillets, or in any of the other cruel inventions of the human mind. Perhaps, indeed, there is in everyone a natural longing to help free animals from the hands of their oppressors, a longing only waiting for the right opportunity to assert itself. I like to think in these terms when I meet people who are not yet a part of the animal rights movement. Like Socrates, I see my role in these encounters as being that of the midwife, there to help the birth of an idea already alive, just waiting to be delivered. I have some sense that this is true in my case; the early evidence is there in my natural inability to see the bird in the cage. Yet, how long it took for the idea contained in that "failure" to be born!

When viewed in this way, and notwithstanding the painful evidence to the contrary--the many instances of my own indifference to animal suffering, some of which I have been obliged to confess on this occasion--when viewed in this way, I think I sense that all has not been chance or accident in my life. When viewed in this way, I think I see that the child I once was, is the father of the man I have become. I sense that I have found my proper destiny, my place, my soul.