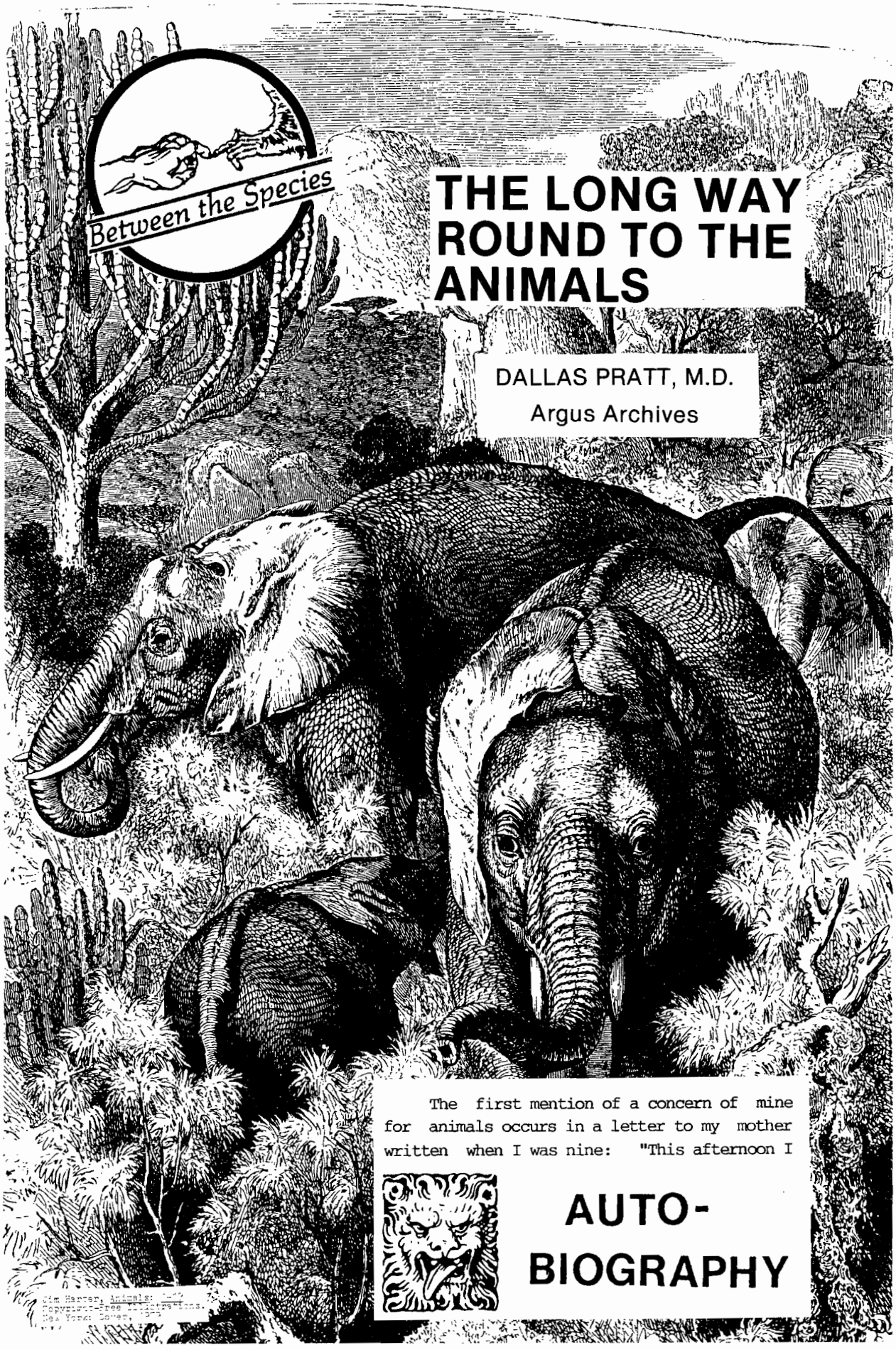

THE LONG WAY ROUND TO THE ANIMALS

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Argus Archives

The first mention of a concern of mine for animals occurs in a letter to my mother written when I was nine: "This afternoon I

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joined a soiety [sic] to prevent cruelty to animals and got a badge." After this promising beginning, my impulse to help animals lapsed for over four decades. How to explain this long disinterest in their plight? As an adolescent I was far from a macho type; on the contrary, I was rather shy, idealistic, a writer of occasional verse. But aside from a few conventional references to birds--"I listen when the first spring phoebe sings," etc.--I can only find one piece of writing which suggests a relationship, and that an equivocal one, with animals. It's in a quatrain entitled "Cooch-Behar," composed during a thirteen-month trip around the world in 1937-8:

Beauty betrayed her, doubly betrayed:
Her beauty I coveted, tracked her, and wounded;
Then the tall grass had hid her, but beauty betrayed-
No truce 'twixt the panther and man was compounded.

This describes an incident during my visit to the northeastern Indian state of Cooch-Behar, where I stayed with the maharajah and his elegant and imperious mother, Indira. They lived in a huge Victorian-baroque palace. At the doors were sentries who clicked heels and presented arms when you passed. The drawing-room was one of several in the palace decorated by the fashionable London firm, Lenygon and Morant, and there in the evening I played backgammon with the maharani, while outside in the jungle owls hooted and jackals howled. "Bad luck," she kept repeating as I lost game after game. In the end, her winnings amounted to two rupies, which she gravely collected.

One morning, I was told that a leopard hunt had been arranged. Nervously I tried to get out of it. They wouldn't hear of it. The animal had been heard growling near a village and was said to have killed a goat. The villagers were relying on us to save their livestock.

The hunt required no less than twelve elephants to transport the beaters and our part of eight: four on which we rode to a heavily overgrown area where the leopard had been sighted, four carrying two-seater wicker houdahs from which we were to shoot, and four for the beaters with noisemakers who would drive the frightened animal towards the guns. As guest of honor, I rode with an aide-de-camp on the maharajah's own elephant.

We stationed ourselves in a line, each elephant trampling down the vegetation in order to clear a place into which the leopard might be driven. We moved our line of guns five times. On the second drive, a beautiful animal, yellow coat spotted with black, bounded out, but the beaters were too close behind her for me to risk a shot. On the third drive, I sighted her again and fired. On the fifth drive, the maharajah's brother-in-law came upon her cowering in a pit and administered the coup-de-grace.

Later, they insisted that I had "drawn first blood" and awarded me the skin.

At the time, I hardened my heart against this animal struggling for life against hopeless odds. My journal sternly noted: "Compunction over the suffering of the leopard is foolish as the beast is a decided menace to the farmers and their stock." The villagers were certainly no friends to the great cats. They lived in poverty, and the loss of a domestic animal to a predator could wipe out a sizeable part of a family's assets. Nor would it have occurred to the ruling family to protect wild animals and compensate the villagers for any loss. Besides, hunting was sport and fun for all, including guests.

Fun for me, too. In recounting these events, I've always tended to emphasize my initial reluctance to join the hunt. Now, the episode seems gruesome and discreditable. However, on recently looking up the account in my journal, I've found the following comment: "I enjoyed the hunt very much. The minute or so when one is standing up in the houdah with gun ready, while the noise of the beater elephants thundering through the jungle towards one and the shouts of the mahouts reach a crescendo, is exceedingly thrilling; and when the leopard suddenly glides into view among the grasses the excitement is almost paralyzing!"

Thrilling it may have been to me at the time--22 years old and fresh out of Yale--but at least I can say that I never hunted again. Perhaps it was only because I was a lousy marksman or because someone stole the fine Purdey shotgun I inherited from my grandfather or because maharajahs, now almost as extinct as leopards, no longer invited me. Whatever the reason, it didn't indicate any particular sensitivity to animal suffering,

because the following year I was in medical school, studying experimental wound-healing in dogs without giving a thought to how the animals had been procured or what their fate might be.

No, many years passed before the event occurred which gave me more understanding and respect for animals and started me "going their way." A pair of Scottish terriers, Heather and Robbie, who lived with friends, produced a litter, from which I was given a female pup.

To explain why this was so momentous, I have to take you back to my childhood--to the year 1920--when the family moved temporarily to France. It was the beginning of our trans-Atlantic travels. The only animal companions which could be taken along were stuffed ones. My best-beloved was a monkey named "Chimpy." At the age of six, I was much preoccupied with what my dying words should be. My growing passion for the new toy soon eliminated other contenders for the honor, and I announced to everyone that my last word would be "Chimpy." But after we had been together for only two months, I lost him in Paris, in the Parc de Bagatelle. We went back several times to search, but in vain. I was inconsolable.

Then, a few months later, in London, passing the window of an Oxford Street toy shop, I noticed a stuffed elephant dressed in pink-striped pajamas. I at once fell in love with this character, and we bought him on the spot. Predictably, I named him Jumbo. Unlike Chimpy, Jumbo has survived. Just the other day, when I was rummaging in a chest, there suddenly was Jumbo, with his flap ears, red flannel mouth, and the lopsided grin which comforted my childhood.

Although these first loved ones may account for the special feeling I still have for primates and elephants, no real understanding came of it. Nor did much develop from the brief companionship my sister and I had with several dogs which stayed for a summer but for whom a "good home in the country" had to be found when our travels began again.

It was not until 1966 that I was at last able to give an animal companion a permanent home. This was the Scottie that came to me from my friend. I named her Maud, after Maud Duke, an Englishwoman who was governess to my sister and myself and who was fond of animals. "Dear," as we affectionately nicknamed Miss Duke, was engaged for a trial period of three weeks. Outlasting several changes of stepfathers and stepmothers, she stayed for fifty years, long enough to bring up my niece and nephew and then to give me the satisfaction of taking care of her in her declining years.

As the Scottie Maud grew up, the mantle of governess descended on her. In the car, she detested jerky driving. Because I had once or twice made sudden stops which tumbled her off the seat, she would watch me closely, and I had only to move my foot in the direction of the brake for Maud to brace herself ostentatiously for the expected shock. I trained myself to drive more smoothly, but it was several years before Maud conceded that my driving was up to Scottie standards and stopped monitoring my foot.

When she was two years old, Maud was mated and produced two females, Evita and Scout. Since then, I have always had Scotties.

Does the reader wonder why I haven't acquired dogs from shelters rather than adding to the overpopulation problem by insisting on specially bred animals? I'm not sure that I can answer this question to my own satisfaction, much less appease anyone more consistently humane than I. All I can say is that in my bachelor existence, the Scottie face has become the family face, as reassuring to come home to as children and grandchildren must be in extended families. So, Scotties--Maud, Evita, Scout, and now, since the first three have died full of years, Dance and Muse--as the song puts it, "I've grown accustomed to your face," and I consider you as much members of my family as I hope you count me a member of yours.

I've mentioned how the companionship of these dogs changed my attitude towards animals. I was amazed at their extraordinary ability to communicate--their infinite variety of sounds, precisely modulated to fit the circumstances, their body-language--for example, Maud's back-seat driving--the revealing way they anticipate or interpret our actions--the "Clever Hans" phenomenon. All this opened up a world of new experience, lifting me out of the rut of anthropocentricity and making me aware of how much animals can tell us if we will only "stop, look, and

listen."

Many have been tempted by pleasure in the company of animals and by a growing disenchantment with our violent and fratricidal times to retreat into that peaceable kingdom where the human-animal bond is paramount. I could imagine my story too ending like that, just enjoying the idyllic relationship between the dogs and myself, with weekend rambles in the Hudson Highlands, walks in the city with them--which even bring smiles to the faces of hard-bitten New Yorkers--and vacations at our place in the south of France, where Scottie antics once caused an Italian poet to write, "Maud was the 'smile' of our summer."

This way of life could fit in comfortably with the other occupation which has absorbed me for the past twenty-five years, a role which derives from my having been co-founder of the American Museum in Bath, England. This museum contains exhibits of Americana and a series of historical rooms, brought from America to England, illustrating how Americans lived during the first three centuries of their history. In the early years of the museum, I was also active as a psychiatrist. Then a tragic accident ended the life of the museum's co-founder, John Judkyn, eventually causing me to retire from practice in order to devote more time to our project. Since then, I've been spending part of every summer in England, in a picturesque rural community, surrounded by objects of art and history. In association with collectors, antiquarians, and curators, I collect and plan exhibitions for schools and the general public.

You'd think that these agreeable activities would have fully occupied me in my sixties and now seventies. A life in the sunshine! But something was missing. I spoke of retiring from psychiatry, and indeed, I stopped seeing patients. But I couldn't stop thinking about the forces which had victimized those patients: abuse in childhood, discrimination in all its forms, and the many ways our environment frustrates physical and emotional needs. So, it was probably not coincidental that soon after I retired, I felt an urge to look into the literature of cruelty, war crimes, child mistreatment, and other evils which lurk in the shadows of modern life. Predictably, I found that the concept, "the end justifies the means," was the grand rationalization used to excuse almost any form of cruelty or violence. I also noticed a parallel in the way this was applied to humans and to animals.

For example, in order to gain knowledge about how to protect their naval personnel shipwrecked in extremely cold weather, the Nazis carried out experiments on human subjects, freezing some to death to test their limits of endurance. Similarly, in a botched-up investigation of stress-produced gastric ulcer, animals in an American university laboratory were kept in restraint in a refrigerator at near freezing temperatures for up to six hours, at the same time being subjected to electric shocks. To circumvent objections to these atrocious experiments, the subjects chosen were "outcasts:" in the former case Jews--"non-Aryans"--in the latter case rats--"vermin." Great as was the species difference between the victims, the suffering they endured and the rationalizations motivating the experiments were much alike.

Instances such as these I knew from the literature, but in the mid-1960's, an event occurred which exposed animal abuse to me in a more personal way. One day, my sister and a friend were driving in the vicinity of Bridgehampton, Long Island, when they noticed a sign reading "Hampton Animal Shelter." "There have been rumors," said the friend, "that they don't treat the animals very well there. Shall we go in and have a look?" My sister rather apprehensively agreed. When they got out of the car, an attendant came up and told them that the shelter director was away and that there was no admission. The visitors brushed this aside on the pretext that they were looking for an animal to adopt and walked in among the cages. They were horrified. "It was like Buchenwald," my sister told me later. "We saw half-starved animals, sick cats, dead dogs, filthy cages." Afraid to confront the woman who ran the place, they hurried away. Once home, they telephoned the ASPCA and asked them to investigate.

The inspection led to charges of abuse and neglect, and in a court action my sister, although a conservative and rather timid person, gave evidence which helped to convict the director. This resulted in the latter being barred from running the shelter for a considerable period.

I was much impressed. My sister had

been brought up in a "hunting-shooting-fishing" society, yet here she was taking the side of the animals against their persecutor. Several of her friends, who had never visited the shelter but were contributing to it on the grounds that "the kind director never put an animal down," were quite vexed with her for making such a fuss.

Looking back at this time, I can see factors which were gradually nudging me towards a new way of life. There was my sister, unexpectedly transformed into a role-model as an activist against animal abuse. There was the friend who enlisted my help in the search for a fur coat made from humanely raised animals (we found that there was no such thing). There was my dog Maud who, in the short space of a year, had changed from a pet into a companion and teacher. Finally, there were the shocking revelations of animal mistreatment in LIFE magazine and in subsequent Congressional hearings, resulting in the passage of the Animal Welfare Act in 1966.

In 1967, I returned from Europe on the QE2. I used to find my annual sea crossing a great way to concentrate on whatever reading or writing I had to do (no telephones!). There was the daily ritual of walking around the deck, two miles or more depending on the weather, body and mind responding to the gentle heave of the ship, the tang of salt in the air, the sight of the water surging past--"the harvest of a quiet eye." Sometimes in moments like this, our inner sea of subconscious thoughts casts up a decisive idea, and so it happened on this voyage. As I walked, it suddenly occurred to me that one way to tackle the problem of cruelty and violence which had been preoccupying me was to try to do something, perhaps through public education and the use of the media, to counteract these abusive tendencies as they affected animals.

During the next six months, I checked out several of the major humane organizations to see if I could be of any use to them or vice versa. Virginia Milliken, of the Humane Society of the United States, paid me a visit. From my notes: "Mrs. Milliken asked me rather searchingly what my interest in the humane movement was. I imagine she has met more than her share of cranks in this activity. I suggested giving a reception at my house to publicize Mel Morse's recently published Ordeal of the Animals, with the author and some well-known personality present to speak to media people and interested friends." The party took place in May, 1968. The "well-known personality" put in an appearance, but when it came time for him to speak, he refused on the grounds that "my media people aren't here." From another meeting at about the same time, leaders of two humane organizations walked out because a veterinarian had presumed to attend, and vets, they said, were known to perform or condone research on animals. So, I quickly learned that even in the humane movement, "the Lowells talk only to Cabots . . .."

In the spring of 1969, I was invited to an informal meeting by three people who were concerned about the inhumane pre-slaughter handling of livestock. One was an officer of the New York State Humane Association, another the representative from a national humane organization, and the third the leader of a citizens group. They were trying to persuade the New York State Legislature to ban the painful "shackling and hoisting" preliminary to slaughter. Since I represented nobody but myself, I remained silent while the experts debated. Finally, I ventured to ask how many animals in New York were subjected to this barbarity each year. Nobody knew! They admitted it was a statistic essential to their campaign, but everyone was too busy drafting legislation and organizing public protests to dig for it. Furthermore, nobody seemed to know where to look.

It was right there, in my head, that the idea for a new organization was born. If there was a need for statistics, basic data, reliable documentation, why not start an archive that would collect and catalogue as much information as possible on animal abuse and then supply data on demand to those active in the movement? How otherwise, without solid, up-to-date facts, could they hope to influence the public, much less legislators? Soon we had office space at 228 East 49th Street, New York City, and several trustees: Ronald Scott, Kennon Smith, and, sometime later, Anne-Marie Papworth and David Pinkbeimer. William Redding was our first Director; now Ron Scott holds that office.

We called ourselves "Argus Archives" and were incorporated as a charitable foundation. Argus was a mythological being with one hundred eyes, fifty of which were always on the watch. Another Argus was the faithful old dog of Ulysses, who alone recognized his

master when he returned home after many years of absence. Keen observers, both of them, and just right, we thought, for a watchdog organization.

From the beginning, Argus has remained independent as an organization. It has joined no coalitions and declared itself on the side of no one except the side of the animals. In the subject areas it covers, such as hunting, research and testing, intensive farming, trapping, wildlife, companion animals and shelters, and many others, it has documented all points of view--this, after all, is expected of a library. But it doesn't merely supply those who come in or phone for information; its own trustees and staff have been its most active clients. They have written a series of reports and books largely based on Argus's archival material--but also on films borrowed from distributors and analyzed for their humane educational potential. The breadth of Argus's interest is illustrated by the titles of its publications: Animals in Trouble: Pets in Urban Housing (1970), Animals into Meat: The Pre-Slaughter Handling of Livestock (1971), Unwanted Pets and the Animal Shelter: The Pet Population Problem in New York State (1973), Traps and Trapping--Furs and Fashion (1977), and Films for Humane Education (1979).

I have made editorial contributions to all of the Argus publications, but my medical background was especially useful in writing two books: Painful Experiments on Animals (1976) and Alternatives to Pain in Experiments on Animals (1980). When I began to investigate the subject in the early 1970's, I was surprised to discover that not a single book devoted to vivisection in America had been published in the 20th century--a grim testimony to the determination of the scientific establishment to keep the laboratory door firmly closed to the public. Recently, several books have appeared describing the abuse of animals in research and testing even more exhaustively than I did, and new alternatives using non-sentient material have been developed and published. However, my attempt in Alternatives to Pain to match the various types of experiments with specific alternatives--e.g., cell and organ cultures, microorganisms, molecular analysis in drug design, and pain prevention--seems to have been an original concept and has not yet been duplicated.

Eight thousand copies of these two volumes have been sold, mostly to libraries, academics, and humane societies. In recognition of my work, I received an award from the Humane Society of New York in 1981 and the Animal Welfare Institute's Albert Schweitzer Award for 1981.

In preparation for the address I was to give at the AWI ceremony, I re-read what Schweitzer had written about reverence for life. I wonder if others have the same difficulty I have with the term "reverence"? Since I can't really "reverence" my own life, can I honestly adopt such an attitude to animal existence? However, I've found that Schweitzer, unlike many who quote him, also emphasizes other concepts. The key words are "thinking," "will-to-live," and "experiencing the life of another." Thus, he who truly "becomes a thinking being feels a compulsion to give to every will-to-live the same reverence for life [I would substitute "concern" for "reverence"] that he gives to his own. He experiences that other life as his own."

Not long after reading this, I happened to be at the Bronx Zoo, in the Reptile House. I had been conditioned since childhood to think of snakes as "nasty." I looked at a snake in a vivarium and decided to try Schweitzer's formula. For five minutes, I just observed. I noticed the little tongue flickering, the watchful eye, the shed skin hanging neatly on a twig like a suit of old clothes. I thought of the creature's will-to-live; how, like me, the snake had desires, preferences, memories. After a few minutes of trying to feel "that other life as my own," my negative stereotype of snakes began to seem ridiculous. Eventually, it vanished--for good.

To achieve this degree of empathy for animals has been for me a painfully slow process. But it needn't have been if, early on, a teacher or other enlightened adult had helped me to experience animals in a thoughtful and sympathetic way. And I don't mean by visiting zoos! Nowadays, there are many excellent films, film-strips, and videotapes which, under the guidance of a knowledgeable discussion leader, can start the process of humane education in the elementary grades. Argus Archives screens scores of such films every year, shows the best of them to school groups and to adult audiences concerned with animal welfare, and publishes books with critical film reviews and suggested discus-

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Opinion

JOHN STOCKWELL
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In The Politics at God's Funeral (1983), Michael Harrington says that his "democratic-Marxist account of the death of God . . . sees the spiritual crisis of the late twentieth century as an essential part of the societal crisis and . . . ends with a call for a united front of believers and atheists in defense of moral values." Robert Bellah and co-authors in Habits of the Heart (1985) suggest much the same, predicating the possibility of success for such a defense of moral values upon a diminishment of our use of "how it makes me feel about myself," individualistic criteria in making valuations and upon a recovery of languages, in particular those of the republican and Biblical traditions, which are capable of handling ethical issues given that these on occasion call for acting with self-denial. These languages, the authors argue, are now clearly secondary for us, and this is a major reason why individuals are at a loss in dealing with larger societal issues. One conclusion that could be drawn from the analysis in Habits of the Heart is that the effectiveness of the animal rights movement might be increased if somehow people in the movement could also address themselves to the recovery of such languages. The recent increase in interest in what may be the potential of religion in the animal rights movement may be seen in part as somehow an awareness on our part that the Judeo-Christian tradition perhaps does employ a language that can impact the issues more significantly than have the languages the movement has been using.

Perhaps . . . Some of us, of course, like to think that we abandoned the use of these languages, not because we didn't know them well enough to use them, but rather precisely because they could not be made to provide for crucial ethical outcomes. Thus, with respect to animals we might say, and perhaps correctly, that the Judeo-Christian tradition simply carries too heavy a burden of speciesism to ever be resurrected for decisive use on behalf of animals.

I think that both these views of religion have much to recommend them. The Judeo-Christian tradition is made up of many sub-traditions (including the Franciscan). So what we probably in fact have at hand is the potential for "a united front of believers and atheists in defense of moral values," in which several languages are employed.

That is one matter. There is, however, another kind of thinking going on about religion and secular culture, seeing both as embodying a monotheistic/monocultural impulse, the core of which is domination. Camus, in The Rebel (1951) already elaborates such a view in his critique of the demand for totality, which he saw as involving the annihilation of nature, urging instead a philosophy of limits. It is from a critique of unquestioned, but in fact likely monocultural, "tolerance" or "cultivation" or "celebration" of diversity, I believe, that Hillman asks us, In Between the Species I/2: 8, "Could you move . . . from becoming a project (which requires 'execution' and must be achieved by will power)?" Even Teilhard's thought is in important respects monocultural. Michael W. Fox ("The Bio-politics of Socio-biology and Philosophy," BTS I/4: 6) offers a criticism of much thought that takes its departure from Teilhard's notion of the "hominization" of Earth. Fox, while appreciating Teilhard on many grounds, says that he "has been rightly criticized . . . for not incorporating concern for the biosphere." The situation is in this respect improved with the conference initiated not long ago by

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sion material. Animal Films for Humane Education, an up-dated version of our earlier film book, with much new material, is our most recent publication.

Humane education may take effect slowly and imperceptibly--or it may be as immediate as the new warmth the family cat or dog senses in the greeting of a child returning home after seeing a truly moving and humane film. That's the "short way round to the animals," and Argus Archives, I hope, can help people to achieve it.