

While selfishness is part of our psychological profile as a species, there's more to us than that. We're possessed also, and fortunately so, with a deep reservoir of empathy, and our capacity to understand the vulnerability and pain of others motivates so many good works, such as aiding the poor or curing the ill. That same trait allows us to have an emotional connection with other species, too—and not just the dogs and cats in our homes or our communities, but animals facing cruelty or crisis everywhere.

It's for that grand purpose that The HSUS exists, fighting to protect animals we know and those we've never met or even seen.

Humans have always had an advantage over animals, and we've long used other creatures for food and clothing and, more recently in our history, for experimentation and testing and for sport and entertainment. Some uses have become even more ruthless of late, their scale almost unimaginable. We raise and kill about 10 billion animals for food every year in the United States alone, many of them kept in severe confinement on factory farms. And we harm and destroy billions of wild animals for their parts or for the pet trade, adding cruelty to the suffering that nature routinely delivers. So much of this conduct is perfectly legal and routine—and those who profit from the system seem interested only in innovations that tip the scales more in their favor.

As I write in my book, *The Bond: Our Kinship with Animals, Our Call to Defend Them*, there's more to the human story than the cruelty we commit and the excuse-making that goes hand-in-hand with it. In addition to all of our collective charitable work for animals, we maintain more pets than ever in our households, spend billions on veterinary services, participate by the tens of millions in wildlife watching, and eagerly tune in to a wealth of nature and animal programming on television. It's hard to find anyone who would say he or she is not an animal lover, and every state has laws forbidding animal cruelty.

When you put all of this social behavior under a lens, what you see is one of the most challenging and confusing moral issues of our day. As a nation and as individuals, we struggle with the boundary between cruelty and economic interest, between caprice and necessity, and between callous disregard and careful use.

More than ever, we are seeing forward motion. As a nation, we docked the whaling boats many decades ago, and we've replaced that fleet with new ships meant for gazing at leviathans and leaving them as living capital in the waters, to be watched over and over again. Whale watching is a \$2.1 billion global industry.

Plainly it's within our power to develop other elements of a new humane economy, transforming moral problems into moral and economic opportunities. We can—and we should—marshal the creativity of the human mind to find better ways to generate income and commerce without leaving so many animal victims in our wake. We can make the transition to humane and sustainable agriculture, to 21st-century science that does not involve wasteful and unreliable animal testing, and to the building of even more wildlife-watching and ecotourism opportunities.

We are born with instincts that give us a head start in doing the right thing for our fellow creatures. Harvard scientist E.O. Wilson calls it “biophilia,” and some others now theorize that there's an underlying biochemistry to explain the powerful bond we have with animals. But whatever the explanation, there can be no doubt that we're drawn to animals, and one need only look at the joyful eyes and smile of a child in the presence of an animal to see the bond's power and universal effect.

Ultimately, a conscious concern for animals is a necessary feature of our moral progress, but also our economic progress. A civil society must sync up its economic institutions and its commerce with its values and ideals, and opposition to cruelty is among them. Animals are not a backdrop or a sidelight to the human experience; they are at the center of the whole drama, and how we treat them is one of the great themes of the human story.



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