

living by voices
we shall never hear:

**SEEING
ANIMALS
DIFFERENTLY**

edited by

Pauline and Les Mitchell



NISC

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An introduction to the book

Pauline and Les Mitchell

WE LIVE IN the midst of animals; the products of their bodies and products made from their bodies are everywhere. Over thousands of years we have used these beings for our own ends; for hauling loads, grinding grain, making roads, carrying people, working in mines, powering machinery, ploughing land and making war. Each day of the year we kill, on average, in the food industry alone, the same number of animals as there are people in the whole of southern Africa. Animals have been our unpaid, unacknowledged and, for the most part, appallingly treated slaves, on whose backs, it is no exaggeration to say, our present world has been built. Perhaps it is time to consider our relationship with them.

For this book we originally asked Quakers and people attending Quaker Meetings to write about ‘seeing animals differently’ and our contributors are Friends or attenders or people who have some association with Friends. The authors live in the UK, South Africa, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

There is a saying that trying to organise Quakers is like trying to herd cats and the diversity in this small book clearly bears this out. We

have not made any attempt to impose uniformity or to ask authors to write to any formula, which means that what you read carries the original voice and style of the contributor. We feel that, rather than a weakness, this is a strength of the collection and shows how diverse yet interwoven our perspectives can be. This is a collection to be dipped into as interest dictates but in so doing we hope the reader will be tempted to read sections that they might not otherwise have read and discover unexpected insights and new directions.

Mike Purton tells the story of the ‘Gypsy dog’ who touched lives and was his companion through many sad and happy milestones while Mario Viljoen recounts his experiences with families of cats and chickens and their encounters with each other in the grounds of the of the St John Ambulance Centre in South Africa. Poems from Chris Mann and Julia Skeen celebrate the diversity and wonder of life – from ant lions to falcons and Ling Johnstone, writing from Zimbabwe, gives us poetry with a darker edge, some of it reflecting difficult times in that beautiful country.

Drawing on the Arthurian legend as a metaphor of our quest to live peaceably with all Earth’s creatures Gracia Fay Ellwood invites us to take a personal adventure and Marian Hussenbux looks at how Quakers have historically related to animals and examines our spiritual calling in this respect. Wilma Davison focuses on Quaker testimonies and how they relate to animals and shares an Australian perspective.

Benjamin Schmeiser examines the linguistic construction of animals and goes on to look at how Quakerism and Buddhism refer to them and Sandra Kyle writes of our relationships with our fellow creatures. Amy Mann gives a simple but powerful personal testimony of her commitment to vegetarianism while Peter Jones reflects on many years of living without eating flesh. John Myhill tells us of his journey through life with the companionship of cows, of their individual natures and struggles and how much they have taught him.

Les Mitchell writes of how, in spite of his reluctance, he has now become a reporter of the unacknowledged war waged by humans on

non-human animals and Susannah Brindle compares our oppression of animals to our oppression of other human groups and asks us to see animals differently.

The title of the work comes from the book *The Outermost House* by Henry Beston who writes of a year he spent living on the beach at Cape Cod in 1926. His writing is lyrical, describing the sea, the storms, the sand, his walks along the beach and the animals and birds he encounters. At one point in the book he considers how we tend to view animals in a narrow, analytical and fragmented way and in so doing miss their true nature. The quotation is often shortened but deserves to be read in full.

We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature, and living by complicated artifice, man in civilization surveys the creature through the glass of his knowledge and sees thereby a feather magnified and the whole image in distortion. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err and we greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, *living by voices we shall never hear*. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth.

Henry Beston, 1888-1968, *The Outermost House* [our emphasis]

This collection is offered as a small insight into the ways we might see these ‘other nations’ differently and behind that vision lie the unavoidable questions of how we should ethically, morally and spiritually live our lives alongside them as our fellow travellers on this, our shared and only Earth.

We wish to thank the authors who have given generously of their time and the Christine Agar Fund who have been kind enough and courageous enough to fund the publishing of this book. We also wish to thank Mike Schramm, publishing manager of NISC (Pty) Ltd, for

his patience, diligence and encouragement. Thank you.

It seems appropriate to close this introduction with the visionary words of the great ecological theologian, Thomas Berry:

What we look for is no longer the *Pax Romana*, the peace of imperial Rome, nor is it simply the *Pax Humana*, the peace among humans, but the *Pax Gaia*, the peace of Earth and every being on the Earth. This is the original and final peace, the peace granted by whatever power it is that brings our world into being.

Thomas Berry, 1914–2009, *Evening Thoughts*



Notes for the general reader¹

Quakers use both the terms ‘Quaker’ and ‘Friend’ rather indiscriminately. There is no difference. We call each other ‘Friends’.

Friends worship and feel attached to their Local Meeting, which up until very recently was called a ‘Preparative Meeting’. Several Local Meetings join to form the Area Meeting – previously referred to as the ‘Monthly Meeting’.

The Yearly Meeting, such as the ‘British Yearly Meeting’, is the body at which a country’s Quakers gather annually.

1 text by Marian Hussenbux

Part One

Animal companionship

- 1: What cows taught me – *John Myhill*
- 2: The Gypsy dog – *Mike Purton*
- 3: Cat and Chicken – *Mario Viljoen*



And so, as the year went along, Chicken and Black Cat learnt a few more tricks. Now each morning when I opened the gate, they stopped running towards me and neither did they watch me as they used to do. They disappeared around the building and by the time I got to my desk the two of them would be sitting on the windowsill of my office, asking for food. They were trying to teach me [...] So, now they get food every day from Monday to Friday inclusive – like keeping office hours! [from Mario Viljoen's essay 'Cat and Chicken' – see page 31]

About the author...

John Myhill lives on a Norfolk farm (130 acres) where his family have farmed for 200 years. As farming does not pay he works in a local hostel for the homeless. He is by training a social psychologist and social anthropologist and has worked in many different fields of care to keep himself engaged with real life.

He was drawn to Quakers via the peace movement in the 1960s. He is currently a member of Norfolk and Waveney Area Meeting and within Britain Yearly Meeting, he serves on the Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee. His particular interests are justice, mental health and overseas projects.

As a magistrate, he does not seek to judge others, but to allow their lives to touch and transform him, so that he in turn can help to transform a bad system.

Currently he seeks the cow-like tranquillity within busy meetings, so that he can offer others some of that inner peace he has in abundance at home.

1 *What cows taught me*

John Myhill

BORN IN HONG Kong, my favourite food as a small child was dried milk. When I learnt that this came from cows, I wanted to see them, and when I did, I was an extremely excited four-year old. I then learnt that my grandfather had a farm with a herd of cows. Aged six, in darkest Norfolk, I met these fabulous creatures: ‘Daisy’, ‘Esme’ and ‘Florence’; I met individuals. Most of my childhood holidays after that were spent with these beauties, in fields and sheds, absorbing their wisdom, their calmness, their curiosity.

Cows are such wonderful listeners. I would sing and dance for them, moo and bark at them, tell them stories. They would gather round me attentively as if I were the most charming and learned animal they had ever met. I soon learnt that if I lay down in the middle of a field, they would surround me, but if I jumped up suddenly and made a noise, they would hurry away. After decades of distracted humans, I am overwhelmed by the compliment cows pay you; hanging on your every word.

Thus they taught me curiosity. Never take anything at face value. Go and find out for yourself. They taught me that a collection of animals

of the same species, sharing food, will have its own social structure, routines, rituals, hierarchy and body language. I knew none of these words, but I saw how they worked in practice, and this inspired me later to study social anthropology and social psychology. “Participant Observation” came to mean, for me, being with a group of people, whilst watching them with the curiosity of a cow. But by that time there was a lot of cow in my personality.

By 1975 I was working on a farm in northern Scotland, as stockman to 60 fattening bullocks. I had taken the job because of several holidays spent hitch hiking up the A9 for the unique beauty of the highlands. Now, just off that major road, yet hidden away from the rest of the world, I started to write a story about a secret concentration camp, in which ‘shitgrubber’ feeds the inmates in a huge shed, just as I was feeding the cows. (Michel Faber’s book *Under the Skin* is a perfect visualisation of my idea, set in the same context.)

It was a long, hard winter. I had come straight from five years of post-graduate research, to a hard-labouring job. I was a very second-rate tractor driver and a puny labourer, but the cows were my friends and it was heart rending to leave them. But at least I did not have to face them leaving me for that trip to the slaughterhouse. I had the pleasure of their company, every morning and every evening. They were always pleased to see me. I had the joy of them, without the expense or responsibility, so I carried on eating beef, because it seemed to come from town, not from my friends.

The summer of 1978 was a traumatic time. My wife and I, and our 4-year old daughter, were visiting ancient sites in the West Country. My wife had a miscarriage; a tragedy she never recovered from and which she never felt able to share with me. I went for a walk and shared my grief with a local herd of cows. They understood perfectly. Each of them had had babies taken away from them at birth. They had wailed night and day for their loss. They knew suffering.

How could I possibly eat these wise, compassionate creatures?

They did not judge me or blame me. They did not tell me to stop eating them. They led by example, eating only grass and vegetables. But, if I ceased eating beef, my favourite meat, what was the point of eating other animals. I have not eaten meat or fish from that day.

I thought it would be difficult, but after a few weeks, I found I really disliked the smell and sight of meat. Over the years, the only difficulty has been restraining the desire to vomit, on seeing murdered animal parts on the plates of those with whom I share a meal.

In 1987, having taken over the family farm, I took delivery of my first cow. Named 'Carmen Overture', she was a White Park with a pedigree going back to the wild cattle of ancient Britain. A superior cow, genteel and genetically distinct from all other breeds of cattle; she had fine long horns and independence unbroken by generations of 'domestication'. She had great dignity and poise, clearly conscious of her centuries of breeding. Stepping lightly from the van, she considered her new surroundings, queen of all she surveyed. The child inside her comforted and reassured her, so that she did not feel alone.

In the weeks that followed, she showed no sign of missing her family, or the close-knit community which had been her whole experience of life. She was alone in a new land, separated from all her kind. Only once did she express a desire for contact. The first time I moved her to new pasture; she bolted past me and headed for the open road. Perhaps she had heard of the Dexter's a mile away. After chasing her for a couple of hours over other people's fields, she accepted that she was a long way from home, and allowed me to lead her back to her new domain.

A few weeks later she gave birth to Rondo. I was in a state of panic, at the sight of two legs sticking out just beneath her tail, and frantically rang the vet. But she stood stoically waiting until Nature produced her boy. From that moment they were inseparable. 'I am Rondo'; never was son more Oedipal, as he grew from a cuddly bear the size of a large

dog, to a formidable half ton of noble power. Carmen was devoted; her whole life revolved around him.

It was the daily experience of this bond that moved me from vegetarian to vegan. How could anyone separate a loving mother like Carmen from her son, ruining the lives of both, just in order to steal the mother's milk? I had bought Carmen with the thought of building a herd and selling the young bullocks for meat. This was a vain plan showing very little self-knowledge. Without calves there can be no milk, butter or cheese, and most boy calves are not needed for reproduction, so they are fattened for meat.

All those years, cows had been listening to me, helping me resolve my problems, providing comfort and compassion. But only when I became the owner, did I really listen to them. Veganism is more difficult than vegetarianism, it takes some thought to ensure a balanced diet without dairy products and it cuts that bond of dependency on mother cow. After all it had been the love of dried milk that first hooked me on cows, and I have often longed, like Ben Gunn, for cheese. Soya milk is so unlike cows' milk, that having made the change, I soon lost all desire for cow's milk. But I still cannot resist cheese if someone is about to throw it away. It seems so dreadful that the product of a cow's suffering should be wasted. At least that is the way I justify my craving.

After the birth, Carmen became great friends with our horse, Rosie. They shared maternal instinct in the little lad, all three grazing closely together. Rondo grew up gentle but irresistible, as he demonstrated by demolishing a tree with his horns every time I moved him to a new field: 'Look what I could do to you if I chose'. In time, the son bred with the mother and she bore him two daughters: Symphony and Tempo; and one son, Woodwind.

Symphony was a wild girl, who never wanted to play mother. When she gave birth to Viola, we had to tie her up in the shed, so that the calf could be held to her teats to suck. When Andante was born, Grandmother Carmen stepped in to show Symphony what to do. In

each case, Symphony was a beautiful mother, once she had begun. But even as a mother, she was not beyond jumping a fence and being the first to dash to a new field. She and Andante remained inseparable till the night of her death. Next morning Andante stood guard over her mother's body. Andante was thirteen.

Tempo was the most perfect of the family, the most white, and the least willing to be touched by humans. When she was having difficulty giving birth, I wanted to get her into a shed. She ran at me and butted me to the floor. She was in pain, and I easily forgave her. After all, she could easily have killed me had she struck me with a sharp horn instead of her forehead. Bolero had to be ripped from her womb with a rope by four strong men. Bolero was black. At this point Rondo, Carmen and Woodwind were separated from the others to prevent further inbreeding. The family was complete yet divided. It was a traumatic time for my own family, and we could see many parallels between ourselves and our cows.

Woodwind had a genetic fault with his front legs, which he was never able to straighten. As he grew older, the burden became intolerable to watch, like the slow decline of Tiny Tim. Yet he was never bitter, never a vengeful Richard the Third. The Ministry insisted that he should be shot at seven years old. When a large animal is shot, they do not fall to the ground, they make a leap, with the suddenness of the pain, which is horrific to watch; so different from the heroic movie presentations.

I fear that I tend to think of the sadness of loss, but that is only because these animals brought me so much life and happiness. In the autumn when there were apples to spare, they would rush excitedly to chomp the fresh fruit. In winter when the snow lay on their backs, they seemed impervious to cold, only they became dependent on the hay I brought and I felt important. Sometimes they would catch their horns in the barbed wire, and wait, mooing till I came and untangled them. In summer they were important to me, but I was largely ignored. A number of times when I was cutting grass in the field where they

were, Rondo would face up to the tractor, as if it were a rival bull, as if he were going to charge, but then moved away, as if to say: 'Only a machine, not worth the effort'.

After Viola went lame and was shot, I decided that there must be a kinder way. So when Rondo became lame with sciatica I asked the vet to give him a big dose of painkiller, as a mercy killing. I am sure he did not suffer, but it took four injections, and two hours of waiting before he eventually passed over.

Humans would suffer far more than either Woodwind or Rondo before we allowed them enough pain killers to die; but having the power to decide was a responsibility I hated. I am sure I often had members of this family killed so as to save me the pain of seeing them suffer.

The ones who really expressed pain were not understood by me, and they died of natural causes. In Carmen's case, I believe she suffered a broken heart. She had grown thin, and never took interest in the rest of her family, once he was gone. Exactly a year after Rondo's mercy killing I found her dead.

Andante was always my favourite because she was the most approachable. She was the only one of my cows who would allow you to rub her behind the ears without wagging her horns to knock your arm away. She would also stand still and let me stroke her, which none of the others would allow. It was a joy to be with her. She had the most beautiful face I have ever seen on any living creature and I loved her as much as I love my own daughters. But when the time came I was helpless to save her and this was one of the greatest tragedies of my life.

The year after Symphony's death, her sister Tempo became lame and thin; death was a kindness. This left the two orphan granddaughters. Bolero was slightly lame, but coping and Andante seemed in perfect shape. But they were maiden cows, lost without their mothers and not company for each other. Andante was secretly eating herself to death. She became so overweight that one day she collapsed and could

not get up. After several days of sitting, contentedly eating apples and drinking water from a bucket that I bought to her, I had to accept that she would never rise again and that it would be too terrible to watch her slow decline.

The tragedy lies in their very naturalness. Here was a family. Not perversely incestuous, but like the descendents of Adam and Eve, they had no choice. I never seriously intended them for food. They were never threatened by predators, always safe. They gloried in the sunshine, turned their backs to the wind and rain, laboured through mud and looked comical in snow; their dulled whiteness like an advert for brand X. Contentment is not happiness, yet they seemed aware that constant grazing and poor weather was somehow better fortune than that experienced by their contemporaries.

There were wild moments of excitement as when escaped cattle from a neighbouring farm made Rondo bellow that special male cry of territorial supremacy. The luxury of concentrated feed in winter, sending them into frolics, rearing and kicking their heels in the air, in an alarming display of ecstasy. There were the spring jousts of locked horns to prove dominance. The wonders of watching them all grow. Each one had a distinct personality and a complex relationship with the other. Their care of each other should have taught me so much. They were the farmers of the land, not I. And they included me in their family for twenty years, and I failed them, as we humans have always failed the other species whose planet we have stolen.



About the author...

Mike Purton spent most of his career as a presenter and reporter in television and radio for the BBC. In his last 12 years with them he was a television producer. Since then he has written occasional pieces on spiritual matters for the Guardian's 'Face to Faith' column.

In 2006, with his partner Valerie Macfarlane, he organised a nationwide Quaker petition calling on the European Union to persuade the World Trade Organisation to raise welfare standards for animals involved in international trade. This led to them being asked to go to Brussels for talks with Peter Mandelson's officials. There, they were invited to join the EU's Civil Society Dialogue, a group which enables not-for-profit, non-governmental organisations to contribute to the decision-making process.

Quakers and Kindred Animals – QUAKA – is now the only faith-based group devoted exclusively to the well-being of our fellow creatures represented in the Civil Society Dialogue

2 *The Gypsy dog*

Mike Purton

MY FIRST GLIMPSE of her was in the summer of 1999. Driving home along a narrow country lane I saw, coming towards me, a horse-drawn gypsy caravan. This was not something I had come across on that road before, although I used it almost daily. The first thing I noticed about it was that it had metal-rimmed wheels which sounded as if they were making quite a mess of the tarmac surface. Then, as I was passing it, I saw that tied on behind were two dogs.

It was probably a couple of months later that my wife came home one day and told me that a friend and her husband, who lived about eight miles from us, had found a stray German Shepherd bitch. She was wraith-thin, in a filthy state, and had a length of twine around her neck. The couple thought she must have been living wild and fending for herself for some time. They had handed her over to the dog warden employed by the local authority for that area.

Earlier in the year, Betty and I had to have our own dog, a Labrador, put to sleep. I suppose we had both just assumed that we would replace him with another of the same breed. But our first dogs had all been

German Shepherds. We had actually bred a litter, but had decided not to produce any more when we discovered the appalling prejudice which that beautiful, intelligent breed attracts, and the apparent lack of concern for the animals' welfare in the standard set by the Kennel Club.

What prompted me that day to ask if I could see this particular stray I shall never know. I can only say that the German Shepherd had always been my favourite breed, and that somehow it seemed right that I should do so. Anyway, a couple of phone calls later we had a date for her transfer from the local authority to the Canine Defense League if her owners had not claimed her in the meantime.

A few days before that date a slightly odd thing happened. I had been playing tennis on the public court in our village and afterwards I drove round to the house where the key had to be returned. As I drew up I noticed a van parked outside with 'Dog Warden' painted on the side. Now I live in a different local authority district from the one where the dog had been found, so I did not take a lot of notice, leaving the key as usual on a peg on the porch. But having walked past the van on my way back to my car, on impulse I stopped and retraced my steps to the house.

It turned out that the dog warden was the son-in-law of the key holder. But he was employed by the neighbouring local authority, and yes, he was currently looking after a stray German Shepherd. The man told me that she had not been claimed. Nor was she to be handed over to the Canine Defense League for re-homing on the date we had been given. It was to be a day earlier... Talking about this later, Betty and I agreed that we should make sure we were first there after the handover took place. And that was what we did.

The report of her emaciated state had not been exaggerated. But she was now clean and well cared for. She could have been anything between one and two years old. We were told that they were calling her Amber – the name suggested by the couple who had found her. One look into those soft brown eyes and you could see why.

It sounds corny to say that we both fell in love with her at first sight. But that is exactly what happened. Neither of us had a moment's doubt that she was intended for us. Suddenly, the way things had fallen into place, finally bringing us here earlier than we had planned, made perfect sense. If we had come on the date we had at first been given we were sure we would have lost her. Someone else would have got there before us, and we were quite certain that they would have wanted her too.

The Canine Defense League – who have since renamed themselves Dogs Trust – are very careful about how they re-home the animals in their care. Having expressed an interest, you must then embark on a process of getting to know one another with the dog of your choice. You are expected to visit it several times, taking it for walks in the lanes around the rescue centre. And both you and your home are checked out pretty thoroughly as to your suitability as a potential owner of a German Shepherd.

With Amber we got along well from the start. She had clearly been through a rough time and was nervous. But she was nonetheless her own person. And there was a gentle maturity about her. Betty and I obviously passed muster with her too. For a few days later, when we had done the paperwork and paid the fee, she climbed onto the back seat of our car – a vehicle which she had never been in before – and promptly went to sleep...

If the journey home was uneventful, once we were home it was not long before her problems began to show themselves. She was well-behaved in the house, accepting, and deferring to, the two resident cats – who made no bones about their prior claim to being there – and generally treating this strange new environment with the circumspection of a perfect guest. But she was wary. An abiding image in my memory of those first few days is of Amber tucking herself away behind the sofa on which Betty was sitting. After a few days there was no escaping the fact that this new addition to our family was frightened of me.

Now we all know that German Shepherds are one-man dogs. I have always found it one of their most admirable qualities, a sign of the seriousness with which they approach the dog-human relationship. They have their own way of deciding where they will invest their love. But once they have made that decision there is practically nothing the recipient can do which will cause it to be withdrawn. It really is a life-long bond, and there have been many instances of extreme cruelty that have put it to the test.

In Amber's case it soon became clear that the previous man in her life had some very serious questions to answer. As his successor, she gave me her loyalty, but the bond of love and trust was simply not there. Sadly for me – and remember it was I who had brought us together – from the very first day she was Betty's dog, and that was all there was to it.

My relationship with her was on a different footing. It would be foolish to suggest that I was not hurt by this. But I quickly came to respect where it was coming from and to accept it. In any case, there was work to be done. The first priority now was that she must see a vet. We needed to know how we could help her to put on some weight. And in any case we would soon have to get her spayed – one of the conditions to which we had agreed when we bought her.

As it happened, one of my regular tennis opponents was a young vet. She had put our Labrador to sleep when age and infirmity had overtaken him, and I had been much impressed by the gentleness with which she performed that unenviable task. Lesley and her family had now moved away from the village and she was working at a practice in a town some miles away. So I made an appointment for us to see her.

What came out of that first visit was just one of many strokes of amazing good fortune which more than made up for the problems which Amber brought with her. After examining her, Lesley decided that she needed a blood test. And when the results came back they went a long way towards explaining why this lovely dog had not been claimed by her owners. She was suffering from a genetic condition called

pancreatic insufficiency, which meant that she could not process the fat in her food. The result was diarrhoea and an inability to maintain weight. We learned that it was a condition which had been bred out of German Shepherds in most parts of the country, but pockets of it had survived.

So where did the good luck come in? Well, with her purchase from the Canine Defense League came six weeks' free insurance cover. Lesley's report meant that we could claim on that policy. And since the problem had been diagnosed within the six-week period, the insurance company continued to honour it for the rest of her life. Not a small consideration when you think that the cost of the enzyme which enabled her to lead a normal life was even at that time more than £50 a month.

With the question of her weight now being brought under control, I set about starting to train our new dog. Once again I soon realised that all was not as it should have been. This highly intelligent adult German Shepherd – a member of one of the most biddable breeds – didn't understand a single word of command. At the same time, something else showed up. If you threw a ball for her she had absolutely no idea what she was expected to do. This told me that she had not had anything approaching a normal puppyhood.

Gradually, as we learnt more about her, I began to wonder what Amber's life had been before she came to us. Living in our centrally-heated house she molted continuously. She was also a very maternal creature, who loved not only puppies but babies and other small creatures, and Betty reckoned that she had had at least one litter of her own.

At this distance in time I can't remember at what stage I started thinking about that gypsy caravan with the two dogs tied to the back. But gradually the evidence that one of those dogs had been Amber developed into certainty.

The man who had denied her the simple pleasures of a normal puppyhood had never bothered to train her either. She had obviously

slept outside – hence her extreme reaction to living in a centrally-heated house. He could not have failed to realise from her condition that she had something seriously wrong with her, but apparently had done nothing about it. And when she finally broke free of the twine with which he tied her up it seems he had made no real attempt to try to find her. After all, he had only to drop in at any police station to set the wheels in motion to get her back. But he never did. That man had a lot more questions to answer than I had at first suspected.

Later, when we had trained her and she could be taken out with us, I sometimes wondered what would happen if we ran into him. My guess was that shame or guilt would probably have led him to try to ignore her. But it wouldn't have worked. By that time I knew her well enough to be certain that whatever he had done to her she would have been delighted to see him again. That's just the way German Shepherds are. We would probably then have faced the problem that she would have wanted to go back to him...

Amber took to her training with delight, and it began to establish a stronger bond between us. She was still Betty's dog – I knew that wasn't going to change – but at least I was gaining a little ground. I well remember one especially magical moment. I had taught her to sit, but was finding it very difficult to get her to obey the command at a distance. This was important, since now that she was becoming more obedient I wanted to give her greater freedom. But she had real difficulty in understanding that when she was some way from me she was meant to obey immediately rather than walking back to me first and then sitting.

We worked at it for ages without success. Then, one day when she was a fair distance from me I synchronised the verbal command with a firm downward gesture of each hand on either side of me. It is probably something which proper dog-trainers are taught to do, but I was only an amateur. Anyway, it worked immediately. Amber went down on her belly and sat there looking across at me. I released her with a 'Good dog! Go on then!' Whereupon she jumped to her feet and

bounded towards me, overjoyed that together we had cracked it at last. I patted and praised her, and she did the lovely little curtsey which I had come to know as her sign of pleasure. She may have been robbed of her puppyhood, but she certainly had a great sense of fun.

She never did get the hang of playing with a ball though. If you threw one for her you got no reaction. After we had been together a while I started taking her with me when I played tennis. She would sit as good as gold behind me at the back of the court, quietly watching the game. The ball often landed inches from her nose. But she would never make a move towards it.

If a deprived puppyhood was the explanation for that, her attitude to rabbits was always a complete mystery. The ones that came into the garden she never touched. She would just sit and watch them – and sometimes there were several at a time – as they grazed on the lawn. It was really as if she saw them as pets. But beyond the fence into the paddock they were fair game. Why did she make this distinction? After all, they were probably often the same rabbits! Anyway, she did; and in the paddock and beyond rabbits – and even better hares – were definitely for chasing. When she caught one she would dispatch it with a single flick of her head. It was something to behold, and I could see now how she had managed to survive in the wild. Unfortunately, it was a rabbit which would eventually prove to be her undoing.

German Shepherds are fiercely protective of their own – both the people in their lives and their territory. The latter can be a problem, since their version of the extent of your land is often not the same as is shown on the deeds. After climbing the stile at the top of the paddock and heading out into the fields I quickly found I needed eyes like a hawk if I was to prevent her seeing off some innocent mutt which had unknowingly wandered into Amber's no-go zone. And even after Lesley had spayed her she would simply not tolerate other bitches anywhere in 'her' village. I can tell you I had some nasty moments.

We also had to be extremely careful if Betty or I had someone helping us as we were working in the garden. On a couple of occasions

our daughter's partner suffered a warning shot across the bows when Amber decided he had got too close to me while helping to clear a ditch. Those nips were delivered with surgical precision. They rarely drew blood, but equally were never forgotten.

Against that, she was gentleness itself with the old and the young. Later, when my sister went into a retirement home, the visit from Amber was the highlight of their week. The whole place would light up as she made the rounds, speaking to everyone in turn without fear or favour. And never, *ever*, putting a foot out of place. But it was only an extension of her behaviour everywhere we went. This was simply their domain, and she treated it and them accordingly. That also included other pets. A cat which she would have chased up the nearest tree if she had met it outside was off limits in its own home.

People responded to her exemplary behaviour. Amber was loved by many, and, as Lesley's treatment took effect, she began to gain weight she turned heads wherever she went. Soon she was going with us almost everywhere. The very few places where she was not welcome because the people simply had no feeling for dogs were quickly crossed off our visiting list. But never was it down to anything that Amber had done.

There was only one person in our immediate circle with whom there was a problem. A friend from Southampton, who had been coming to stay with us for years, seemed to remind her of her former owner. Whenever Robin was with us she would be on edge, always trying to keep Betty or myself between her and him. When we were sitting together in the living room she would never take her eyes off him. We considered everything that might be triggering memories from her past. Was it the black trousers which he usually wore? His glasses? His aftershave? Where we could we made changes, but nothing had any effect. Robin, who had done nothing to deserve this treatment, loved her and was quite hurt by it. Sometimes we got him to feed her to try to establish a bond between them. And she would let him take her for walks on the lead. But Amber was not happy.

Eventually, after this had been going on for some considerable

time, I called Dogs Trust to get the experts' view about it. Their advice was that Robin should totally ignore her and wait for Amber to make the first move. Given time, they said, she would come to him. So that is what we did. Throughout each of his subsequent stays he simply blanked her. It took a long while, but finally she went to him.

But all our dog really wanted was to be with Betty, and if not her, me. She hated being left at home, and once I had learned this, I never trusted her alone in the house. The only place I could safely leave her – or so I thought – was in the large clay-lump stable. So I made a wooden frame to replace the lower part of the door and fitted it with a sheet of heavy welded-steel mesh. The first time we went out she walked at my heel past the car in the garage and went into the stable. But was it imagination, or did I catch a look of pity in her eyes as I bolted the door behind her? Returning home later, I found her loose in the garden. She had somehow managed to grip the edge of the sheet of welded-steel in her teeth and bend it far enough from the wooden frame to allow her to squeeze through. There was blood on the ends of the steel rods, but she had not broken any teeth... God knows how.

Round One to Amber... The Mark Two door used the same sheet of welded-steel mesh (which I had tried, not entirely successfully, to straighten in a vice), but welded now to a specially-made one-inch box-steel frame. The hinges and bolts were also welded onto it. Amber watched me fit it, but said nothing. The first time I returned after leaving her on her own I discovered why. She had been busy working out where to start on the demolition of the clay-lump walls.

I could never bring myself to scold her for any of this. Everything she did had sound logic behind it. It was just that when they designed Amber they forgot the giving-up gene. She saw her role in life as to be with us and to guard and protect us. Nothing was going to stand in the way of her fulfilling it. You might be forgiven for thinking that she had us just where she wanted us. But it really wasn't like that. In every other aspect of our relationship she would obey and cooperate without question. It was just that when, as she saw it, her whole reason

for being was challenged she had to make a stand. That was all there was to it. What could I possibly do but admire it and be grateful for the presence of this quite extraordinary creature in our lives? Besides, she was brighter than me – and both she and I knew it.

And so the routine was set. She behaved impeccably within the limits which we knew we had to accept. One of her beds was in our hatchback, and she would happily settle down there for long periods at a time if we were shopping. I never needed to lock the car when she was in it. Anyone trying to get in would have lived to regret it. In addition to her bed in the garden room, she had another beside her mistress in our bedroom. On the occasions when she had to be left at home she would trot uncomplainingly into the stable and as soon as she heard the car pull out of the drive she would be back at work scratching more clay out of the wall. When we arrived back I would sweep up after her. Only very occasionally would she also have torn up her bedding. This was the one thing which really concerned me. But as she never fought being put in the stable or gave any outward sign of distress I had no way of distinguishing these occasions from her normal behaviour pattern. It did worry me, but there was really nothing I could do about it.

As time passed she built up many friendships, both two- and four-legged. One of the strongest was with Sabre. A heavy-coated black-and-sable German Shepherd, she first met him when he arrived at my friend Shirley's house as a puppy. Shirley lives just along the street from me, and she got him as a replacement for a German Shepherd she had recently lost. Amber loved him, and they became firm friends, although theirs was always really a godmother and godson relationship. Sometimes the four of us would meet up for walks. Or if we were passing their gate Sabre would come bounding up to us. But she would give him only so much of her time before turning away from him to get back to the business in hand: the walk.

Later, as Sabre developed into a gentle giant of a dog, Shirley had to be careful taking him past my place. Alongside the paddock lived Wilson, a white retriever who was desperately in love with Amber. A

confrontation between these two male dogs could have been nasty, and Shirley knew German Shepherds well enough to take care to avoid it.

Wilson used to come round to see Amber. He would walk up the paddock and sit at the gate into the garden, gazing towards the house. Sometimes, when she and I were setting out on a walk, he would join us and accompany us part of the way. Only so far, then he would turn round and go back. But when we returned I would see him in the distance, lying on his belly in the grass waiting for his beloved. Usually I would spot him first and tell her. She would prick up her ears and scan the horizon. When she saw him she would leave me and set off at speed to join him. He would do the same. Like the two lovers racing towards one another in all those films... When they met there would be the traditional little dance followed by the game of tag. Then Amber would be away, without so much as a backward glance. I sometimes felt she treated her suitors rather shabbily. But it was always her family which mattered most to her.

Within that family, we began to feel that she had become too attached to my wife. As an experiment, we decided that she should sleep in another room with me. Looking back, I don't believe it would have made much difference. Amber was too intelligent and knew too much for such a ploy to have succeeded. And as it turned out we never got the chance to find out.

In the space of twenty minutes early one morning in May 2000 our lives changed completely. Betty had a heart attack and was gone.

I have only one significant memory of Amber in the immediate aftermath of that terrible night. Going into Betty's bedroom – perhaps it was the next day – I found Amber on the bed. It was something she had never done before, and never did again. Devoted to my wife though she undoubtedly had been, she gave no other sign of its effect on her. She didn't search for her. She didn't go off her food or pine. She just seemed to understand and accept it.

It was really as though this was what it had been about all along. She had come to us to look after me. Somehow, somewhere, it had all

been planned. And this remarkable dog knew it. German Shepherds, after all, are working dogs. For Amber, I came to accept, this was a job. From that moment her attitude to me was different. It wasn't that I had replaced Betty in her affections. That never happened. The simple fact of my gender ensured that for her I was always the reminder of that man who had mistreated her. The wariness towards me remained.

In the haze of those first days on our own, I busied myself with preparations for the funeral. Two of our closest friends were flying over from Sweden and would be staying with us. Together Amber and I drove to Stanstead to collect them. On the day itself she came with us to the crematorium. And afterwards she helped me to entertain the throng of people whose lives Betty had touched and who had come in some cases great distances to express their gratitude. I simply did not want to be there. It was Amber who saw me through it.

Three years later – par for the course – I got the first symptoms of cancer. But it wasn't until September 2004 that I went into hospital for surgery. That was the one and only time when Amber had to go into kennels. We were reunited ten days later. Thirty weeks of chemotherapy took up the greater part of the following year, with Amber, as ever, patiently waiting in the car while I had my treatment.

One evening in mid-summer a lady arrived at the door to the garden room at the back of my house. She had come to take part in a discussion group. There were a number of cars outside and she was aware that she was probably the last to arrive. After tapping on the door, she entered the room – and immediately froze.

Valerie and I had met a few weeks earlier at the Quaker meeting in the local town. She was a new attender, and we had had several conversations. We liked each other, but she had not been to my house before. So she didn't know about Amber, and I didn't know that she had a bad history with dogs. Later she told me that she had actually been attacked by male German Shepherds on two separate occasions. Not surprising, then, that she was absolutely terrified of them.

Confronted by Amber emerging from the sitting room to greet the

new arrival, she must have thought that her time had finally come! Luckily, her friend Claire, another Quaker, who knew about her problem with dogs, had followed Amber into the garden room. Now she grabbed hold of her collar, at the same time telling Valerie that this was a very gentle dog. Valerie said afterwards that her instinctive reaction had been to leave. But reassured that she was now dealing with a bitch, and after I had shut Amber in the stable, she was persuaded to join the others.

Things settled down, and knowing how my dog hated to be excluded from any gathering, when we broke for coffee I asked if I might now let her back in. The others all knew what a softy she really was, and agreed. Valerie later recalled that when Amber rejoined the party she went round everyone to say hello again – with the conspicuous exception of the woman who had made the quite unnecessary fuss and got her banished to the stable...

It was not an auspicious start. But – to her great credit – Valerie was not about to give up on our friendship. We quickly discovered that we had a great deal in common.

There were long talks after the Sunday Quaker meetings, at her home – a beautiful converted seventeenth-century barn five miles from me – as well as in my own garden. At first I treated the Amber situation with caution. But, little by little, progress was made there too, thanks in no small measure to the formidable intelligence which the dog brought to it. I'm told the turning point came one afternoon in my sitting room when I briefly left them alone together for the first time.

Amber was lying on the mat in front of the fireplace – it was her spot. Valerie spoke her name, and Amber got up and walked over to her, kissing her hand and sitting down beside her. She put her head on the arm of the chair, and Valerie stroked her. It doesn't sound very much, and you would probably need to have witnessed those earlier encounters that Valerie had had with dogs to understand the significance of the event. But from then on they were friends. Much later there was one small incident when we were trying to maneuver a

heavily laden wheelbarrow together – too close together for Amber’s peace of mind. Suddenly Valerie got the warning shot across the bows. I can’t say she was pleased, but by then she had come to understand her canine friend well enough to see the action for what it was.

As our relationship grew closer, there were the inevitable problems associated with living in two houses. Not least was the fact that Valerie could not bring herself to allow a dog into her lovely home. There were walks in the garden and the surrounding countryside. But for a time when Valerie and I were in the barn Amber stayed in her bed in the car. Still, I knew from past experience that it was not going to be a deal-breaker. Sooner or later the lady would succumb to the delightful personality and sheer good manners of her new friend.

So my dog and I tacitly agreed to play a waiting game... Valerie’s home, Valerie’s rules. Always on her best behaviour anyway in other people’s houses, here it went far beyond that. It was as if Amber was on a mission. As we walked towards the door she would hold back. And when we closed it behind us she simply laid down outside and quietly waited, watching us all the while through the glass. It went on for weeks, but inevitably the day came when Valerie relented. I well remember the moment when I held the door open for Amber to follow us inside. She just stared at me in disbelief. Then she looked at Valerie for her approval. And only when she got it did she step – oh so gingerly – across the threshold.

Thus from the unpromising start of Valerie’s unhappy earlier experiences developed something quite wonderful. Exploring the wooded grounds of the barn was a delight for Amber after the more formal garden at my home. Pretty soon she knew every inch of it. Until now our regular walk had been across the road, through the churchyard and out into the fields to the north, where our arrival would sometimes startle a herd of deer. But now, with the help of a sturdy hook, we braved the brambles and fought our way through the undergrowth to open up a new walk on the barn’s most extreme boundary. It became known as the ‘South-west Passage’.

There was a notable lesson that I learned during this period. One night at my house Amber would just not settle. It began with whining which kept us awake. I went and tried to quieten her, but she would have none of it. After a while the whine became a howl. In desperation I finally took her out to the stable and shut her in. She just carried on howling. It was still some while before we humans began to hear the faint rumble of an approaching storm. My poor dog – always terrified of thunder and with her infinitely superior hearing – had been aware of it all along. It was a reminder to me that we should not underestimate the more subtle differences which exist between us.

Most of my memories of that time, however, are happy ones. Once we all went to the sea. It seemed to be a new experience for Amber, and I can recall her disconcerted expression when she swallowed salt water for the first time. We still couldn't get her to fetch, but we did see her sheepdog instincts come to the fore as she raced from one to the other making sure no one got separated from her small flock. Then there was the family wedding when we stayed in a little hotel in the New Forest. She behaved so well while we were there that the management forgot we had her and had to be reminded to put her down on the bill.

Some months later, and quite suddenly, we reached the beginning of the end. Amber and I were walking through the paddock at my place when she put up a rabbit very close by. It took off at speed, and then all at once, executed a ninety-degree turn to try to throw her off. Amber – hot on her quarry's heels – attempted to follow. But it was too much for her and she damaged her back.

I had been here thirty years before with my first German Shepherd. The lower spine is the breed's weak point. This time I went on the internet to check out the wheeled contraptions that some people were now using to help their dogs' mobility at this stage of their lives. I thought long and hard about buying one. But in the photographs they looked so *infra dig*, and Amber was such an elegant animal. In God's name, how could I do this to her! Having made the decision against it, I knew it was now just a matter of time. Ahead lay the prospect of a

gradual, but inexorable, decline. How long it would take was the only uncertainty.

The awful thing about this situation, with a much-loved friend slowly deteriorating physically, but mentally as alert as ever, is the sheer torture of having to pick *an actual day* to end it. With my first German Shepherd – to my shame I had left it far too late. I had been too concerned with my own feelings about losing her. I would not do the same thing again. What mattered now was what was best for Amber. That was the theory that I put to Valerie. I probably sounded more confident about it than I in fact was. But it was then that whatever it was that had guided me through the whole of my Amber experience decided to take a hand one more time...

Valerie came back from a visit to her osteopath to tell me that someone had left a card on the waiting room wall. It advertised the services of a veterinary acupuncturist. Both of us knew a bit about acupuncture, and I had been particularly impressed by its efficacy as a pain reliever. So I dialed the number and Lesley picked up the phone.

It was the first time I had spoken to Lesley in eight years. She had left the practice where Amber and I had seen her and we had joined another one. Now, having had her second child, she was working as a locum, and had done an acupuncture course as another string to her bow. Amber was not a dog you forgot, and a couple of days later the two of them were sitting together on the mat in front of my fireplace.

Lesley was not sure how much acupuncture would help. But Amber loved to see her, and seemed to enjoy the physical contact as the needles were deftly inserted in her back. So every few weeks I would call Lesley and she would come and give her another session. When a friend urged me to take her to a specialist orthopaedic veterinary practice of which she had heard, I talked to Lesley about it. She said they had a good reputation and it was worth a try. So Valerie and I took her one day, but the verdict we came back with was that there was nothing they could do for her.

The amazing thing about this period was how accepting Amber

was. Proper walks were now a distant memory. As the weeks went by she was finding it increasingly difficult even to get around the garden. When she had to go outside, she would always try to do so without help. I have known other dogs at this stage of their lives look at their owners almost as if they blamed them. Amber never did. She saw it as her lot and just got on with it.

There came a day when it was clear that she had had enough. It was time to give something back to this lovely creature who had given so much to me. So I made the call.

Lesley came and sat on the mat with her as she had so often done in the previous months. This time she had shaved a small area on one of Amber's front legs. And it was a different kind of needle that she took from her case. Very gently, she slipped it into the vein she had exposed. Amber was looking at me as I held her paw. Then I watched the light go out in those soft brown eyes.

Postscript

That, however, was not to be quite the end of the story...

By this time – and quite unconnected to what I have been telling you – Valerie and I, in addition to attending Quaker meetings in our local town, had for several years been engaged in an investigation into spiritualism. In the course of my work as a broadcaster I had had a number of psychic experiences, culminating in what remains the single most extraordinary thing that has ever happened to me. It took place in my living room in Norfolk, and in addition to myself had been witnessed by both Betty and our daughter Lisa, who has written her own account of it.

This is not the place to describe that life-changing event in detail. Suffice it to say that its effect was to totally alter my attitude to life and death. And ultimately, twenty years later, to lead Valerie and myself to the Spiritualist Church in Norwich.

If you have stayed with me this far, I think you will agree that what I now have to tell you goes some way to confirming the sense of a

purposeful plan which had gradually developed over the nine years that Amber and I spent together at a particularly significant period of my life.

By the summer of 2009, Valerie and I had had many experiences of people we had known and loved when they were alive making contact with one or other of us, though never both at the same time. The mediums themselves often came considerable distances to use their gifts as channels of communication between our world and the next. And they did it for the price of their travelling expenses (something which I found hard to believe until I got to know the people who run the church and the strict controls that are exercised).

On the 28th of June that year, the medium was someone new to us. I learnt later that it was in fact his first appearance at the church, and that he himself knew nobody there. His name was Alan Bray, and he came from Walthamstow (travelling expenses £35 – no appearance fee). There were probably about ninety people in the church that night, and Valerie and I were sitting in our usual places about a quarter of the way back and a couple of seats away from the central aisle.

The first part of Alan's demonstration was fairly run-of-the-mill, but it quickly became clear that he was a very sensitive medium. Then he said something which made me sit up: 'A dog has just walked into the church. She's making her way up the aisle. This is a lovely German Shepherd.'

He paused for a moment or two as if he was being given additional information from a hidden source. Then he went on: 'You didn't have her from a puppy. This was a rescue dog. And later – when her back legs failed – you looked into the idea of getting a trolley for her.'

By this time, as I have said, we had had many experiences of 'dead' people we had known – and sometimes loved – while they were alive, making contact with us through the succession of mediums who gave generously of their time to serve the congregation in Norwich.

Valerie had had her first communication only a few weeks after we started going to the Sunday evening services. And very impressive it

had been, but in an odd way. The medium, a minister of the Spiritualist Church – so a person of some standing – had come to her with a description of a lady who needed to contact her. Try as she would Valerie had been unable to recognise her. But the medium had refused to give up. She kept coming back to her, telling her she was sure the message she had was for Valerie. And finally it all came together.

It was someone Valerie had been close to when she and her husband had lived in London before they moved to Norfolk in the sixties. She now had an important piece of advice for her. When she finally was able to make the connection, it proved to be highly relevant to Valerie at this time. What I found equally convincing was that the medium had been so certain who the message was intended for. That woman simply *knew* – as did so many of the others we encountered in the months that lay ahead.

So when Amber walked into Norwich Spiritualist Church a year after Lesley had put her to sleep we were delighted but no longer entirely surprised. In her life on this side contact with the people she loved had always been the most important thing to her. Why should it be any different now?



About the author...

Mario Viljoen grew up in northern Namibia (formerly South West Africa). He was very fortunate to have had many close encounters with animals while growing up and experienced some very anxious moments at times but even the scary ones turned out well in the end. He joined the merchant navy after school and was privileged to swim with dolphins off the Angolan south coast where he also made the acquaintance of a very bossy grouper fish who insisted in joining the dives. Mario has also had the joy (and sometimes the sadness) that go hand in hand with meeting wonderful creatures on land and in the sea around Mauritius, Madagascar, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Congo (DRC) and some way up the Congo River. Even in towns and cities he has shared some wonderful moments with animals, some sad, some funny but always a treasure.

For the past seven years, working through St John Ambulance, in Grahamstown, South Africa, he has been trying to do his bit to help people improve the quality of their lives. Hopefully he helps to motivate people to respect themselves and each other. He believes that people who respect each other also have the capacity to respect their environment and whoever shares it with them.

The world and its inhabitants, from the smallest to the biggest, fascinate and amaze him. Films and books about people, animals and their environments give much food for thought. His two favourite animal books at the moment are: Bats Sing, Mice Giggle by Karen Shanor and Jagmeet Kenwal, and Pleasurable Kingdom by Jonathan Balcombe. What makes these books extra special is that he has observed many of the animal activities described by the authors. And they shed light on some activities he has observed but could not quite believe.

At the other end of the spectrum are the 'sadder' books such as Blösch by Beat Sterchi. Here the stark circumstance of people and farm animals, where both human and animal survival is dependent upon the dictates of productivity and profit, is agonisingly real.

3 Cat and Chicken

Mario Viljoen

ACTUALLY, CHICKEN ARRIVED before Cat. And anyway, there were two cats – not counting the large number of strays that came and went. Even the two cats under discussion came and went and sometimes were not seen for a day or two but, as a rule, they were present most of the time.

Chicken arrived on 19 December 2004. He was the weirdest looking little thing. He was so ugly that he was hard to miss. He was really scrawny, hardly a fluffy hair on his body and no feathers to speak of. Pink, as if sun-burnt, about twenty centimetres tall and with outsized feet and head. I did not give him much of a chance with the stray cats around and was sure that if the cats did not get him then the stray mongrels that rove town under cover of darkness were a sure bet to end his existence.

So, the Christmas holidays came and went, and when I returned to work on 4 January 2005, he was still around. He was looking a bit plumper, as he had grown some feathers which gave him a bit of body. I still did not rate his chances of survival very high but had to admit that he seemed quite alert and, at the slightest threat from a stray cat

or dog, ducked through the fence into the military property next door.

Another month went by and he was looking better and better and getting to be quite cocky (excuse the pun) about it. He was spending so much time next door in the military property that one of the secretaries phoned me one morning to ask who he belonged to and what was the St John Ambulance chicken doing in their yard. I explained that he was his own person and did not answer to anybody else and if he was bothering her, she could chase him. She sounded somewhat offended by this and was quick to reassure me that she did not intend to chase him at all but if I did not mind, she would love to feed him occasionally. Of course I agreed.

He also spent some time in Mrs Crosby's garden. She does not have a huge garden but it is very pretty and well-kept. So when Chicken made holes in the garden for dust-bathing or sun-bathing, these holes were very visible. Mrs Crosby would chase him from some patches and he would make himself at home in other patches and be quite cheeky about it. Fortunately Mrs Crosby also has a soft spot for Chicken and she fed him from time to time. Sometimes Mrs Crosby would throw the food over the wall onto the St John driveway to lure Chicken away from her garden. He was too smart to be so totally sidetracked, and after eating, he would be back scratching in her garden.

By this time he was getting to be really handsome. Mottled brown and white all over, with a red comb and orange beak and feet, he struck quite a pose. His mostly black and grey tail feathers made a wonderful cascade – not forgetting the solitary green feather to round off the end of his tail. He had started 'strutting his stuff' and seemed to be developing quite an opinion of himself.

About this time two things happened in his life: He started practicing his crowing. This was highly unsuccessful but it seemed that he was going to keep trying until he got it right. The second thing was that two kittens appeared.

This was now March and I suspected that I knew the mother as I saw her in the vicinity of the kittens from time to time. She seemed to

be the travelling kind and popped up every now and again throughout the year. She was really pretty and had some stripes on her hind legs, which made her thighs look dressed in pantaloons or zebra pyjamas. The rest of her body was an even light-grey in colour. I had seen a very black cat with white paws, and suspected that was her travelling-man-husband. He did not often visit and seemed to be quite the grumpy sort.

Back to the kittens; the brother – I was really fooled, as it turned out, this brother was actually the sister of the grey cat, which I did not realise it until she had some kittens of her own – is pitch black with the most wonderful yellow eyes. The sister – and this really is a sister to the black cat as she also had kittens at the same time the black one had hers – is a very even grey, with ever such slightly darker stripes across her legs from hips to toes. These stripes seemed to match the mother's stripes exactly in pattern and colour if not in darkness. She also has beautiful eyes. Very little yellow and even that is not too noticeable in the green.

Almost as soon as the mother became scarce (or scarcer) the two kittens started following Chicken around. At first he ignored them but very soon he began to call them whenever he found something good to eat. This 'morsel' was invariably not to the kittens taste but they would come running whenever he made certain clucking noises, just in case Chicken got it right.

He made about four easily recognisable sounds when communicating with the kittens. The first one was a serious and excited calling sound one hears roosters on the farm make when they call their hens to food. The other sound was more like the noise that hens would make when calling their chicks. And this divides into two distinct sounds: calling when they sound the alarm to make the chicks run for mother's safety as fast as they can and the other a gentler sound when she is just calling them to come to her for her reassurance or a rest. The fourth sound was when they were already under her wings for the night or a rest. This last sound was just a single, soft cluck now and again to let them

know they were safe. Chicken was quite the expert at all these sounds and the kittens responded to them just like chicks would with their mothers.

It did not take them long to get very comfortable with each other and soon we could see Chicken scratching a patch in Mrs Crosby's garden in which to stretch out and relax in the sun. The kittens would join him and be all over and under him and when they got bored with the sunning bit, they would retreat to under the lemon tree in the shade to keep an eye on him from a distance. Soon I also found their home under the palm tree next to the garage. The thick undergrowth made a good shelter from the wind and is good protection from stray dogs, as they are slowed down a lot when trying to get into the dense vegetation.

They used this shelter for the whole of the winter and had a day-shelter under another, smaller, palm. Here they could catch the morning sun and the kittens could crawl under chicken when it was a bit windy.

It took some months before I realised that these fellows planned to stick around. I started putting out some food two or three times a week. Some canned food for the kittens and chicken feed for Chicken. Very occasionally the mother cat or the suspected father would be around and finish off most of the food. This did not happen too often and the kittens thrived.

Then one morning something strange happened. Around mid morning I went outside and found Chicken, the two kittens and another five cats all sitting on a low wall under a tree in the back yard. There was the mother cat, suspect father, another largish grey cat, a Siamese-cross-Persian looking cat and a large scruffy rusty-orangey-brown with greyish streaks. Chicken was scratching about and the kittens were playing; chasing each other around Chicken and through the assembly of cats. The assembly of cats seemed to be in some sort of conference. This lasted about thirty minutes, after which everybody pushed off except the kittens and Chicken.

Since that day I have never seen all the cats together again. Some

individuals would drop in now and again, but not often, and never for more than a day or two. The mother had totally disappeared.

Well, the kittens grew up and became very handsome young cats. The black cat followed Chicken around most of the day. The little grey cat joined in some of the time but seemed to have become more independent. She did not allow Chicken to boss her around. Chicken sometimes gave the black cat a piece of his mind and this was very entertaining to watch. One morning I threw some food out for Chicken near my office window. Chicken immediately came running, calling the cats as he went. The black cat immediately realised that the food was not to its liking and slunk off to sulk in the shade of the agapanthus plants. After some minutes a few doves joined Chicken but he quickly showed them who was boss by stretching his wings until the tips scraped on the ground, all the while launching threatening attacks on them. Once Chicken had enough to eat, he backed off and the doves took over. Black Cat watched this for a while and then started stalking a dove. Chicken watched closely and as Black Cat was about to pounce, Chicken pounced first; right on top of Black Cat. Black cat was hugely surprised and turned on his back, shivering. Chicken walked around her a few times, scolding as he went. This did not entirely stop Black Cat from trying to catch the doves and other birds – she just became more aware of Chicken’s whereabouts and only stalked the birds when she was sure Chicken was not close-by. So, Chicken lorded it over Black Cat most of the time and Black Cat put up with it. When it got a bit too much, she would run off some distance and just glared at Chicken from a safe spot.

Now, Grey Cat was a different story. When Chicken saw reason to reprimand her, she just flattened her body to the ground and, as Chicken approached, she would flatten her ears as well. If by this time he did not get the message, she hissed, fumed and spat quite seriously. Usually he got the message at this point and backed off. On the few occasions that he ventured even an inch closer, she would just smack him up the side of the head. That invariably got the message knocked

into him, so to speak.

And so the year went by and Chicken grew into a really handsome fellow. He could now also crow loud enough to be heard a block away despite the traffic noises. Often one could see Chicken and Black Cat parading on the front steps and veranda or even on the pavement in front of the St John Ambulance premises. Some passersby nicknamed him 'Nando', after the Portuguese-style chicken franchise.

And so, as the year went along, Chicken and Black Cat learnt a few more tricks. Now each morning when I opened the gate, they stopped running towards me and neither did they watch me as they used to do. They disappeared around the building and by the time I get to my office the two of them would be sitting on the windowsill of my office, asking for food. Now they were trying to teach me – with some success I might add – that the food must be forthcoming quickly when they are waiting on the windowsill. So, now they get food every day from Monday to Friday inclusive; like keeping office hours!

Sometime during 2005, Grey Cat became scarcer and I would only see her two- or three-times a week. Her tummy was getting bigger and she looked pregnant. Then, about two months later, she looked thinner but still came to ask for food by sitting below the window on the pathway. Occasionally she would even get impatient enough to get onto the windowsill and ask for food and this was quite brave of her as she is much shyer than her sibling. So we thought that there may be a few kittens around and that she had to eat for herself and them. We never heard or saw the kittens during these days. When Grey Cat was sunning herself, one could see that her tummy hair was not as sleek as it used to be. So I guessed that she must have been suckling a kitten or two or more.

Now, through this whole period of Grey Cat being scarce and having babies, Black Cat never changed her routine. She did not even look any plumper than normal when she waited on the windowsill for her food. She did seem a bit more impatient and was quick to complain very insistently when I was not being snappy enough with the service!

Then, along came a sad day, I suppose, but it also showed another aspect of this chicken-cat sort of family relationship.

I parked the car, as I usually do, nose slightly under the loquat tree and went inside to open the office for the day. Chicken and Black Cat were sitting on the windowsill as usual and I threw some food for Chicken through the window. I then opened a can of cat food and went outside. As I passed the car I saw Grey Cat. She had deposited a small kitten – maybe eight weeks old – just in front of the car under the tree. She left it there and followed me to the food bowls. After putting the food into the bowls I went back to the tree to have a closer look at the kitten. Grey Cat followed, picked up the kitten and put it at my feet. It was in very poor shape and looked as if it was close to death. I don't know what she tried to say but I am sure that she knew it was not going to survive – maybe she thought I could do something about it.

I went back inside and fetched a dry cloth to pick the kitten up with. The ground under the loquat tree was very wet and I moved the kitten about a metre away to a dry leafy spot under a small palm tree. The kitten was very pretty and had the most wonderful dark eyes. Grey in colour but stripy-streaked from the nose and eyes over the head towards the back where the colour was more evenly grey. At this point Chicken came rushing up to see what I was doing. He immediately went over to the kitten, making clucking noises as he fussed around it. He made himself comfortable very close to the kitten and then stretched out a wing and tucked the kitten under it. Some hours later, he was still sitting there with the near-to-death kitten under his wing. He did not flinch; even when I came quite close to have a better look at them. He stayed with the kitten until it eventually died.

A few days later, Mrs Crosby told me about the kittens. By this time I had noticed that Grey Cat had two tortoise-shell kittens following her around – very carefully, as she kept them hidden behind the shrubs and the large stem of the grape vine. I had no idea about Black Cat's kittens, as I still had the erroneous idea that this was the brother of the grey one! She told me what politics were being enacted around

her garden shed. Chicken is a very territorial fellow and tries to boss it over the babies. So, the two mothers made a plan: When he started to bother the kittens, or even just got too close to them, one of the mothers would call the kittens into the shed; or even onto the roof of the shed. The other mother would then engage Chicken in a sort of decoy strategy and lead him away from the kittens. This decoy action would include brushing against him, falling under his feet, miaowing, etc. until he got distracted and followed the mother some distance from the kittens.

Mrs Crosby also put out extra food to cater for the extended families. She usually did this towards evening when they were all settling down in her garden shed. Mrs Crosby must have had quite a soft spot for these creatures, as she only put out the best cat food for them – not that they always seem to appreciate it! She said that at times they seemed quite fussy about eating the food she gave them! When the weather is fine, the cats and kittens were in the roof of the shed where they could relax or play under and in between the foliage growing over the top. When it was cold or rainy or windy, they took shelter in the shed. During the day the mothers took the youngsters for strolls around the property and the kittens often ended up on the roof of the office under the Zimbabwe creeper over the back stoep at St John. The rest of the routine was quite established and very similar to that of the past: Early morning Chicken and Grey and Black ran around to my office window and asked for food, as if they were really starving and hadn't seen any food for a month!

The kittens numbered six in all. It seemed Grey had three kittens – the grey stripy one that had died, and the two tortoise-shells. Black had four black kittens – little replicas of their mother! Later on one developed a small white patch on the chest, another an even tinier white patch, and the other two remained black all over.

Of the new batch of kittens, one tortoise-shell was killed by a car in Hill Street and I buried her in the garden. The other was adopted by students along with one of the black kittens. The three remaining

black kittens got names: Oliver – whatever he got to eat, he always asked for more! Friskie was a very active fellow and sometime later he disappeared; and Pudding was the female – plump and soft with a very round face. Friskie, Oliver and Pudding were eventually trapped and taken to the vet to be fixed. Once back in Hill Street, Oliver and Pudding settled in and it was at this time that Friskie left.

The black and grey mothers had more kittens. Good homes were found for them all – some via the SPCA, Grahamstown. The black mother usually only had black kittens – except possibly one that was black and white, but even that one could have been the grey mother's. The grey mother usually had tortoise-shells, grey-and-whites or black-and-whites. It was amazing to see the mothers look after the kittens. Very often one of the mothers would disappear for a while and then all the kittens would be with the other mother, and vice versa. During the rearing of the several litters of kittens, Nando kept his hand in and it was quite comical to see him strutting through the garden with several kittens in tow. Amazingly, just like their mothers, they would come when he called them for food. He never seemed to get it into his mind that calling the kittens to crushed mealies and seeds was not to their liking. He would peck furiously, indicating to the kittens that they should join in the feast but got no response. He got a much better response when he called them to their feeding bowls. This, too, was funny as he would make a big show of calling them and then pecking at the food in the bowls until the kittens started eating at which point he would back off and just watch them.

Despite the large number of cats around, the garden has many wild birds: Rock pigeons, doves, thrushes, robins, finches and others. And, of course, the kittens would stalk these birds when they came to peck at Nando's seeds and mealies. Nando was quite happy for these wild birds to share his food. Maybe he noticed that they had feathers just like him. This situation gave rise to several very funny incidents.

Several doves were enjoying the chicken food. One of the kittens saw this as a great opportunity to practice some stalking. The kitten was so

engrossed in this activity while getting closer and closer to a dove. Just as he was about to pounce Nando rushed at him, clucking wildly. The poor kitten flopped over on its back with fright as the doves made their escape. Nando then strutted around the kitten, making severe clucking sounds, scraping his wingtips against the ground and scratching with his feet. He seemed to give the kitten a good sounding off for trying to catch a dove. This happened a few times and the kittens soon learnt not to practise their stalking skills on doves when Nando was in the vicinity. This was like *déjà vu*. He had gone through the same routine with the mother cats some months previously.

Interestingly enough, Nando was quite happy for them to stalk grasshoppers and other bugs. He was also happy enough to gobble these up when the kittens had had their fun with the bugs.

Sometime during 2006 Nando got to be too destructive. He discovered that when the pots of bulbs and other flowers were turned upside down, he could scratch through the damp soil for a few worms. Mr Crosby did not think that this was funny and Nando had to go. Fortunately, he found a good home that was really very animal friendly. Cats, dogs, a sheep, wild rabbits, some baby Egyptian geese, which grew up and eventually flew South (North?), and even chickens – silkies, to be precise. It took him a few weeks to figure out that these silkies were distant relatives and he must have had the realisation that he was closer family to them than to the cats. Once this dawned on him, he wasted no time and within four weeks or so there appeared the strangest chicks. Sort of silkie but it was easy to see the father's contribution to the gene pool. One little fellow grew up to be a really stunning rooster. He is almost a replica of his dad, just smaller with extra feathers around the legs. He was given the name 'Peri-Peri'.

Early in 2007 Grey Mother and Black Mother each had another batch of kittens. When the kittens were about six weeks old, Grey Mother along with her kittens disappeared. Some of the black mother's kittens also disappeared and only one remains. This fellow was caught and neutered. He has since turned into quite a character.

He is beautifully striped and some people call him 'Stripy'. I used to call him 'Little Squeak', as he never really mewed when he was small. It was more like a little squeak. Now that he is getting quite big and handsome, I just call him 'Squeak'. Sometimes he miaows but he still has a squeak most of the time.

By October 2007 black mother had another batch of kittens on the way and finally Mrs Crosby managed to catch her and take her to the SPCA. Here she had her kittens and it was reported that they all found homes. She was then spayed but before she could be collected by Mrs Crosby, she managed to escape from the SPCA.

Then, about ten days later, she arrived on Mrs Crosby's back stoop. Somewhat worse for wear with lots of ticks, a bald patch or two but otherwise she seemed quite pleased to be home! Everyone was so pleased!

Most of the kittens were not given names. Quite understandably I suppose, as most of them got adopted when they were about ten or twelve weeks old. The ones that stuck around got names, but strangely enough neither the black nor the grey mothers were ever named; apart from 'Black Mother' and 'Grey Mother' or just 'Black' or 'Grey'.

The grey mother sometimes came and sat very close to me but never allowed me to touch her. She had a very independent streak and always seemed quite regal and aloof. Black Mother was more easy-going and would often allow me to stroke her as long as I did not try to pick her up. Despite these traits, the grey mother always waited until the black mother had eaten before she came to the food. They hardly ever ate from the same bowl at the same time. The grey cat disappeared sometime during 2007. We all hoped for her safe return but after a month we were sure that she was not coming back.

From the time she was still very small, Black Cat had incredibly bright-golden-yellow eyes. She used these to great effect. Many times I felt that I was being watched and on turning around, there she would be, staring at me with her bright-golden-yellow eyes.

Now, nearing the end of 2008, we still regularly have four cats

visiting the office early every morning, Monday to Friday, for breakfast. After this meal they all trot back over the fence to see what snack Mrs Crosby has for them.

Oliver still asks for more food whenever he is fed. Despite his eating habits and being de-wormed from time to time, he has stayed very sleek and slim. Squeak loves being brushed. With his very thick coat, I can understand why – the brush reaches deeper into the fur and he loves that. He also loves being picked up and cuddled for short periods of time and very strictly on his terms. Black Mother loves a thorough scratch between the ears, and along her neck and back but still does not like being picked up. Her eyes are still wonderful and seemed to have mellowed somewhat – still beautiful but not as intensely golden as in her younger days. She can still look at me with enough intention that I know she is looking at me without me seeing her. Sometimes it takes me a while to spot her under the plants from where she watches me.

Communication from animals: Why don't we get it?

From my interaction with several cats over many years I have come to the conclusion that they communicate very clearly at times. When I take the time and pay attention to a cat that seems to have a message to get across, I often 'pick up' on what the message is. Some talking is quite obvious. This is the case when one of the cats manages to catch a mouse or rat. The talking can be heard from a distance and we (my wife, sons and I) can immediately say, 'Cheeky (or whoever) has a rat', before actually seeing the cat.

Some other communications are not as clear. Some time ago two of the cats started acting somewhat strangely. They would come to me and mew like they used to do when they were still tiny kittens. They would then run some way and stop to see if I was following. They would then visit their food bowls and mew kitten-like but not actually eating, look at me and run to the cat door. I brushed this off as silly playing. However, they still did this the next day and the next. At this time I decided to see what they were trying to communicate. Both cats

continued mewling kitten-like, running a few steps, and then stopping to see if I was following. So I followed them into the back yard. After a while one cat stopped this behaviour and just sat watching while the other cat carried on. I kept following the cat. At the back fence the cat stopped and stared intently at some weeds behind the fence. I had a close look and saw what this was all about. In the tangle of weeds was a very tiny kitten of maybe six weeks old. I could not see any other cats or kittens and, as the kitten seemed quite wild, did not try to catch it.

At this point both the cats that had made all this effort to get me to see the kitten turned back to their normal behaviour and have not repeated any of it since.

I then had a fair idea why the cats originally showed me the food bowls while doing the mewling bit, so that evening I sat quietly in the kitchen and after a while the kitten came in (very cautiously) and had some food.

Another moment of cat communication occurred recently. Lucky wanted to sleep on the couch but the cushions had been arranged in a way that left less than the normal space she sleeps in. She sat looking at the smaller space and then looking at me. I felt sure she was trying to let me know that she wanted the cushion moved but did not do anything other than observe. After a while she got onto the couch and just looked at me. Then she looked at the cushion and then at me. This was repeated several times and still I did not do anything other than watch her. She then pushed the cushion with her nose, looked at me. She repeated this a few times until I got up and moved the cushion. She then happily flopped down and after some grooming fell asleep.

Elsewhere I have written about the intention of Black Cat. She hardly ever makes a sound but her stare is so intense and focused that I become aware of her being there without actually seeing her at the time. This still happens regularly and I have been subjected to her stare on at least two separate occasions. She had a bowl of food in front of her but was not eating. She just kept staring at me until I put some other food in the bowl that she was more particular to. So maybe she

has me conditioned!

Some of the things that happen with the cats are not necessarily communication. It is more like conditioning in that a certain action is rewarded and then they repeat this when they want some attention.

A ginger male (Linky) once stretched up against the door frame and I said: 'You are such a tall boy!' I stroked him a bit and off he went. A few days later I remembered that incident and said to Linky: 'Show me tall boy'. And he did. So now more often than not when I call him a tall boy or a tall cat he stretches against the wall or furniture and of course he gets rewarded with some attention.

The interesting thing is that a female ginger cat (Powder) started copying Linky and for a while she also did it. She does not pay attention on cue as Linky does or even when I ask her to show tall cat she does not often oblige.

Even Arnie (the kitten the cats showed me in the back yard) has on two occasions 'showed me tall cat' but it seems it does not do much for him as he has not repeated it.

One of the cats at work (Squeak) loves being brushed. He seems to understand the words 'brush' and understands or associates that with 'chair'. So for a while I would say to him: 'If you want a brush get on your chair and I will come and brush you'. He would then get onto the chair and I would brush him. After a few weeks of this he made a shortcut to the ritual by getting on the chair and miaowing a few times until I come over and brush him. So from him being conditioned with the words 'brush' and 'chair', he now has me conditioned.

When Squeak was a younger cat he was very wary of everybody including me, but would sit on a chair watching me. I found that if I spoke to him, he would respond by starting to purr and then at that point he was happy for me to approach him and rub his back, neck and sides and scratch his head and chin.

Finally, I have noticed that some people seem to have the right wavelength for communication with cats; on my computer there is a photograph of one of the cats at work. A student from Rhodes

University admired it and I offered to introduce her to this cat (Oliver). So we went outside and I called Oliver and he came and was very friendly to her. She then wanted to know if there were other cats around and I told her there were another three cats but that they are fairly wild and very wary of strangers. She said that she would like to see them as cats just adored her. So I showed her where the cats normally hang out in the neighbour's back yard. She called them and they all came over to her and she then proceeded to pet them all and even pick them up. Something I have not been able to do with two of them for several years.

Communication to animals: Do they get it?

Do they understand the words we say to them or do they pick up on the intent we try to get across? From observation with cats they definitely understand some words. Most of us have had experiences with dogs understanding words or at the very least reacting correctly to various commands. Cats do not seem to respond to words or commands as directly as dogs but from some personal experiences, they are quite good at picking up on the intent. One of the cats that has adopted us and moved in started to make continuous messes in the house and also chased the other cats. At some point I got really annoyed with all this and told the cat to 'get out, stay out and don't come back until you decide to behave'. Well, the cat got out and stayed out, living in a storeroom, for several weeks. I visited the cat once or twice a day to give it food, change the water and talk to it (and feeling somewhat guilty for having been so forceful with him). So after the cat had been living in the storeroom for some time I told him that if he was ready to come back into the house he was free to do so. He eventually came back and since then he has behaved in a more acceptable fashion and hardly ever chased the other cats. For a while the other cats chased him and even now he gets chased from time to time. Is it all just coincidence?

Then there was a more direct and somewhat instant response. It seemed that three cats at home were involved in dislodging the bottom

of the cockatiels cage and pushing it on to the floor. The one cockatiel was safe in the cage and the second was missing.

When I walked into the kitchen two of the cats slinked out and as the third started walking off I told her: ‘You are naughty cats. Where is the bird?’ She looked at me from where she had flattened herself against the floor, tail down and sort of slinking away. So I told her that she needed to show me the bird or she would be very sorry. As she slunk out, looking at me over her shoulder every now and again, I kept repeating for her to show me the bird. I followed her very closely as she slunk out of the kitchen into the backyard to an unused toilet. She went in and sat in front of a broom and dust pan and looked directly at the items in the corner. Sure enough, the bird was hiding behind these in the corner. I picked the bird up and said to the cat: ‘Good cat for showing me the bird.’ And as I went back to put the bird back in the cage, the cat was following me; walking very upright, head held high, tail up as if she was very pleased with herself.

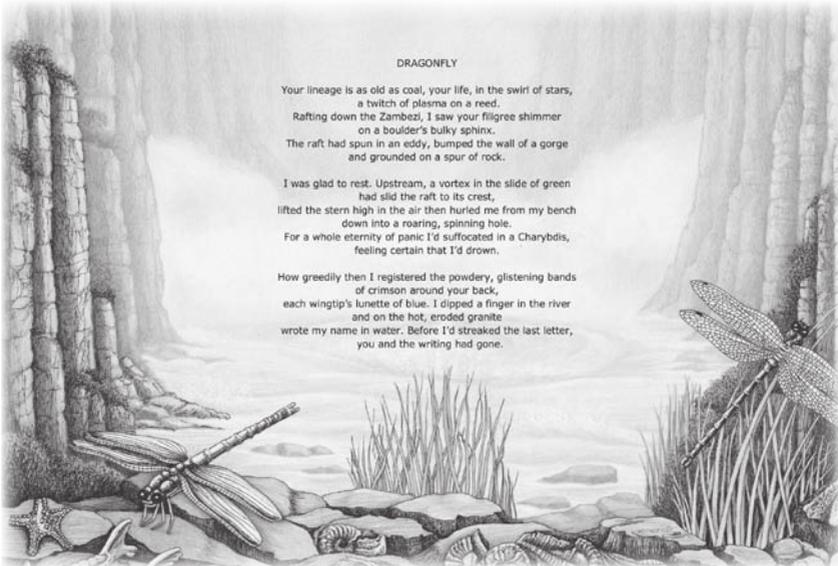


Part Two

Animal-inspired poetry

4: A collection of poems – *Ling Johnstone*

5: Lifelines – *Chris Mann & Julia Skeen*



DRAGONFLY

Your lineage is as old as coal, your life, in the swirl of stars,
a twitch of plasma on a reed.
Rafting down the Zambezi, I saw your filigree shimmer
on a boulder's bulky sphinx.
The raft had spun in an eddy, bumped the wall of a gorge
and grounded on a spur of rock.

I was glad to rest. Upstream, a vortex in the slide of green
had slid the raft to its crest,
lifted the stern high in the air then hurled me from my bench
down into a roaring, spinning hole.
For a whole eternity of panic I'd suffocated in a Charybdis,
feeling certain that I'd drown.

How greedily then I registered the powdery, glistening bands
of crimson around your back,
each wingtip's lunette of blue. I clipped a finger in the river
and on the hot, eroded granite
wrote my name in water. Before I'd streaked the last letter,
you and the writing had gone.

*Your lineage is as old as coal, your life, in the swirl of stars,
a twitch of plasma on a reed.*

*Rafting down the Zambezi, I saw your filigree shimmer
on a boulder's bulky sphinx.*

[from Chris Mann and Julia Skeen's illustrated poem 'Dragonfly' taken from their book *Lifelines* – see page 53. All poems and artwork from *Lifelines* are reproduced with acknowledgement to KwaZulu-Natal Press.]

About the author...

Ling Johnstone was born in Birmingham, UK, and lived in Singapore where her father had been in a Japanese POW camp and wanted to return to that part of the world. Later she moved to Port Elizabeth, in South Africa, then Luanshya, Northern Rhodesia and subsequently to Rhodesia.

Ling went to Rhodes University (B. Journ.) and the University of Cape Town (H. Dip. Lib.). After a spell with The Argus in the seventies, she moved back to Zimbabwe to work at the former National Archives of Rhodesia. Ling now works at St George's College in Harare – 'a lovely school'.

Ling became a Quaker about 15 years ago appreciating the acceptance, understanding of others and non-dogmatism of Friends. She loves trees, the bush, the different smells of the seasons.

4 A collection of poems

Ling Johnstone

Gone – so many gone

One only flew over this evening –
A sacred ibis.
There used to be so many –
A long slender arrow
Across the evening sky.

Less and less
As time's gone by.
Slowly dwindling (like us)
Abandoned,
Flung apart,
Scattered,
Blown away
Like ... old leaves
Swirled away to
Die.

The soul cannot thrive apart from
What
It
hungers for!

Caged Leopard

This was written after a visit to the London zoo where I saw the most beautiful large cat I have ever seen. It was a black panther – but the notice on the iron bars just said: ‘New arrival’.

It's hungry eyes
Are searching
Searching for escape...
It paces,
Paces on velvet paws.
Paces on restless paws,
Then stops and looks,
Looks through the cold steel bars of its cage.
No longer the hunter,
Nor even the hunted...
Now an animal with a broken spirit,
Never again to laugh at fate,
Never again to hunt for its meat,
Never again to run with its mate...

A cringing animal
An animal of hate,
Hating its grey-cold cage,
The never-changing days,
Hating even its own existence
Pacing, ever pacing..
Waiting, ever waiting
To be freed.



Feline Flowers

This was written in Zimbabwe after a friend, who took in stray cats, made the decision to euthanise them all. They were no longer able to feed them due to the political catastrophe in the country and were finally driven to leave their home. [December 2008]

There's a new flower bed against the wall
And yet – the house shows a gradual
Emptying.
Departing
In a few days
And yet – there's a newly dug bed –
Nothing said
Only – there are no cats here today,

(They won't be here to see the blooms.
A life time uprooted and still
These new roots put down
To be
Flowers they will never see.)
Nothing said – only – the catmint
Won't grow in sun – a hint?

The cats are curled up among the flowers
In eternal sleep
Beneath their bowers.

Just a few of the many lives 'freed'
To fill the dictator's selfishness and greed!



A note about *Lifelines

Lifelines is a book and a show about animals that brings together science, literature and art. The animals range from aardvarks to zebras and include dragonflies, jellyfish, kudu, seahorses, rhino and warthog.

Chris Mann, the author, performs the poems and original songs about animals written for the guitar below colourful, large-scale graphics projected onto a screen.

The animals take centre stage in a literary presentation that aspires to re-consecrate our attitude to nature.

About the authors...

Chris Mann is a poet and playwright, the convenor of Wordfest and was recently appointed ad hominem Professor of Poetry at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.

Julia Skeen is an art teacher and artist whose work encompasses painting, book illustrations and digital graphics for multi-media shows. She attends Grahamstown Meeting for Worship.

5 *Lifelines**

Chris Mann & Julia Skeen

Dragonfly

Your lineage is as old as coal, your life, in the swirl of stars,
a twitch of plasma on a reed.

Rafting down the Zambezi, I saw your filigree shimmer
on a boulder's bulky sphinx.

The raft had spun in an eddy, bumped the wall of a gorge
and grounded on a spur of rock.

I was glad to rest. Upstream, a vortex in the slide of green
had slid the raft to its crest,
lifted the stern high in the air then hurled me from my bench
down a roaring, spinning hole.

For a whole eternity of panic I'd suffocated in a Charybdis,
feeling certain that I'd drown.

How greedily then I registered the powdery, glistening bands
of crimson around your back,
each wingtip's lunette of blue. I dipped a finger in the river
and on the hot, eroded granite
wrote my name in water. Before I'd streaked the last letter,
you and the writing had gone.

Ant Lion

1 Your sandpit broiled in the sun.
I hunkered down, took a twig
and bent to the edge of a mine.

The sand was poised. Precisely.
A touch, and a stope collapsed,
choking the floor with its scree.

A pause. A hot stillness of sand.
Were you shuffling memories
of land-slips with *homo habilis*?

A twitch. A bulge. Then *flick-flick*,
a spray of grains spattered up,
slithering back down in a tide.

You were a mole, a whirligig,
a dust-devil. You snuck around
below a dimple, a sink-hole.

I sat and gawked at your skills.
How you could slug out a year
without a snack in a famine.

How when the summer sun
battered your sand-trap
you'd slur your cell-life down,

squeeze shut each spiracle pore
and back-absorb the moisture
barrelled in your rectal pouch.

When did you suss out physics?
Each grain was deftly perched
in a subtle, invisible matrix

of pressure, friction and gravity.
Unschool'd, miles from Euclid,
you'd spaded out a perfect cone.

The poetry of nature, I thought,
bubbles up in the awe of discovery.
Science is the aquifer of the well.

2 I tensed. Tugging a wing-scrap
a glossy black hoplite of an ant
had slid backwards over the rim.

It panicked, trampling its legs
in a hot snow, until it triggered
the avalanche of its own demise.

You waited, then shoved a pair
of crab claws through the debris
and clamped it round the waist.

The forager bucked, then lay still.
I felt I watched, within your yard,
the workings of a cosmic rhythm,

the energy crunch, then transfer
that blasted a sun's mantling fire
into the dust that fleshes us both.

We were implicate life. You drank
a warm sacrifice of the nutrients
that feed the lifelines of earth

as I who live off a cornucopia
of animals, plants and thoughts
feasted on astonishment at you.

Peregrine Falcon

Climbing a crag, I heard a *kwaak-kwaak*,
and looked down and saw you scudding
across a river's crinkle on a bushveld plain.

You looked as small and remote as I felt.
You were a dark speeding speck of a bird,
a faint fury hollering, *Get out of my niche!*

Pulling slowly, up and over warm basalt,
I saw a carcass on a balcony in the sky.
I read you then, raptor. Your meat-hunger,

bunching its wings, had hurtled down, down
from out the glaring white zenith of the sun
at the grey fleck of a rock-pigeon far below.

Thump! A blue-black explosion of wings,
a scrunch of talons. A flapping, a jerking
lugged heavily to this abattoir of a ledge.

I stared and stared, at the parable of a kill,
at the stark, almost cryptic life-in-death art
of a headless squab on the table of a feast.

A spillage of granules, loosed from its crop
was drying already its seeds for a new terrain.
A dust-coloured foraging ant, a mite's red dot

enacting some earthed, intrinsic narrative
hurried to the manna of a glisten of blood
as a maggot-fly entered the crib of the wound.

I turned and gazed, out over miles of bush,
awed that the plants, the hunger of animals
made such a simmering green Canaan of death.

I began to love you then. You sky-wrote to me
what you signal my species, when you migrate
and float round the earth: *Leave me to my life.*

Seahorse

I saw you first behind thick glass.
A horse-head in a sea-grass forest,
a spiral of tail curled round a stem.

The short stubby fin on your back
began to undulate its fan-thin ribs.
You flew slowly through your air.

You reminded me then of Pegasus.
Of catfish and whiskered molluscs
in the salt marshes of your lagoon.

Of Ovid's mind, where vegetation,
people, animals and deities merge
in the estuarine tides of mythic time.

I pressed my forehead to the glass.
Your green had an octopus mottle.
Your eye-glance was all chameleon.

Nearby, a sprinkle of infants hung,
as spindly as plankton mosquitoes.
You'd reared their eggs in a pouch,
a kangaroo womb until their birth.
Were you creation's perfect male?
A sea-mare floated from a reed,

your partner, your spouse for life.
I wondered if she knew emotion
and felt what we suppose is love.

The bone-hoops beneath her skin
gave her a crinoline, a bridal look.
Your daily wedding dance began.

She glided down an aisle of pillars,
entwined her curl of a tail in yours
and rose slowly, twirling with you
within a watery tabernacle of life.



Part Three

Perspectives on animals

- 6: Answering ‘That of God in Everyone?’ – *Susannah Brindle*
- 7: Guidance in co-existence with other than human animals
– *Wilma Davidson*
- 8: Taking the adventure – *Gracia Fay Bouwman Ellwood*
- 9: A Friendly perspective on our fellow beings
– *Marian Hussenbux*
- 10: Some thoughts on living as a vegetarian – *Peter D Jones*
- 11: Hold all creatures dear – *Sandra Kyle*
- 12: Animal testimony – *AH Mann*
- 13: Reporting The War – *Les Mitchell*
- 14: A sentient being in the Light – *Benjamin Schmeiser*



... the photograph of a wild species reaching out, in the extremity of its distress, to humanity touched the world. Emerging from an area of smouldering bushland, ‘Sam’, a severely burnt female koala, held out her paw to David Tree, a volunteer fire-fighter, and ‘asked’ for a drink from his water-bottle. [from Susannah Brindle’s essay ‘Answering “That of God in Everyone”?’ – see page 61]

About the author...

*A convinced atheist until she was visited by an experience of the Light that unifies all existence, **Susannah Brindle** became a Quaker in 1983 in the hope of joining with others who were similarly committed to following its leadings.*

Since 1967 she has been involved with various aspects of wildlife and rainforest conservation – specifically reptiles and possums – and is a compulsive tree-planter. Her experiences ‘in Nature’ inevitably led to relationships with Aboriginal peoples. In 1995, at the request of an Aboriginal elder, she wrote a series of shamanic animal stories, one of which – Jaleesa the Emu – was eventually published by Penguin. In 2000 she delivered Australia Yearly Meeting’s Backhouse Lecture – To Learn a New Song; a Quaker Contribution to Reconciliation with the Earth and its Peoples. In 2002, she co-authored Kinship with Creation: two Quakers share their views with Scottish Friend, Alistair McIntosh (published by Quaker Green Concern, UK).

For nearly a decade, Susannah facilitated the Alternatives to Violence Project in Victorian prisons. For the past 10 years she has worked in an open community of spiritual healers exploring the more-than-human dimensions of life guided by the Spirit.

She lives in country Victoria, Australia, with her husband and two dogs.

6 Answering 'That of God in Everyone'?

Susannah Brindle

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world...

QUAKERS SENT THESE uncompromising words ringing down the centuries, but the power of what has come to be referred to as the Quaker Peace Testimony lies not in its words but in the tried and tested reality of a relationship with Christ who told us to love our enemies – or at least with ‘that of God in everyone’ which, at an organic level, prevents us from warring with others.

If we are to testify to our relationship with the Earth, such a Testimony will be based upon experience that is equally uncompromising and enduring. It will speak of our relationship with ‘that of God’ in the more-than-human world¹ which we interact with as equals under God, which we are totally accepting of, which we pay full and respectful attention to, and which we enter into co-creative communication with instead of imposing on it our ideas of the best ways to proceed. Such a Testimony will reflect to the whole world our radical re-examination of ‘that of God in everyone’ – arguably Friends’ best loved cliché.

¹ – a phrase coined by David Abrams in *The Spell of the Sensuous; perceptions and language in a more-than-human world*, (New York: Pantheon Books) 1996.

Men as Top

Of course, in the olden days, before inclusive language, we used to say ‘that of God in every *man*’ and assume that women were included. Then women Friends began stridently to affirm that they did *not* feel included by the use of a word which, to them, signified one gender and the dominant one at that. Women Friends began to tell how things were for them in the Meeting, and in life generally – how they felt their identity had been subsumed by the norm of the male view of the world. Gradually the message filtered through, though not without some pain, frustration and resistance on the part of male Friends, who suddenly found themselves scarcely knowing how to address their female counterparts. An alternative for this term ‘man’ – for so long accepted as immutable in the English language and for so long incrementally increasing male self-esteem and reducing female self-worth every time it was used – had to be found. Men Friends had to rethink their whole approach; what they had once assumed was acceptable to all no longer was. While pockets of tacit misogyny still linger, some men Friends regarding lip-service to gender equality as sufficient change to their ways, many men Friends were genuinely horrified at how their unthinking behaviour had impacted upon more than half the membership of the Society of Friends – and of the world’s population at large. As a result, they came to respect, learn from and be enriched by an entirely other perspective. A quick glance through our Friendly literature can now date whether something has been written pre-1980s or post-1980s. Not only can relationships between the genders now blossom in an environment of greater honesty, trust and respect, but a subtle yet significant broadening of Friends’ theological awareness has been wrought by replacing those three offending little letters with three that have the power to unify all polarities – ‘one’.

Whiteness as Top

‘White’ Friends in Britain and her former colonies have been able to observe the history of a similar exclusiveness regarding that of God

in ‘people of colour’. Unthinkingly seeing ourselves as of no colour, the norm against whom other peoples were ‘tinted’ (as a jolly English Friend once jested) and deemed inferior, we were unaware that our prejudices spoke louder than our protestations of ‘equality under God’. I once facilitated a racism workshop for a service-focused Quaker Meeting in a part of London vibrant with Asian cultures. Except for one obvious exception, all attending Meeting for Worship were WASPs and, at the workshop which followed Meeting, the notion that one might actually speak with a neighbour or fellow-shopper who happened to be of Asian descent was regarded as daringly new.

Being confronted with the extent of our prejudices greatly challenged Australian Friends in the 1990s. During this Decade of Reconciliation, facing horrific details of the post-invasion history of our country became inescapable, even for those of us who did not want to know. Those of us who had assumed ourselves to be well-disposed towards Aboriginal people were appalled to discover that the underlying racism of our unrecognised attitudes had been on display to all but ourselves and that we were the last to know. On one occasion, a Friend I had never met phoned me and confessed amid sobs of shame that, such was his upbringing, he instinctively regarded Aboriginal people as ‘filthy, unintelligent and little better than monkeys’. I had to tell him he was not alone, although he was perhaps somewhat more honestly self-insightful than many. These prejudices, which, for most of us who grew up in Australia, have, until relatively recently, been almost at a DNA level, make listening to and hearing Aboriginal people very difficult. Believing that things could have been – and still were – as dreadful for them as they were telling us, was often well nigh impossible.

The Aboriginal story has been a horrifying reality to grasp. We had built a nation on the proceeds of massacre, theft and enslavement. By our use of Aboriginal peoples and their sacred *countries* that gave them their identity, we had amassed the nation’s wealth, yet denied them their rightful share – often, indeed, *any* share – in it for more than two centuries. We wondered where we Friends had been while all this

was going on. Perhaps, like the Pharisees, we too had walked by on the other side of the street because we saw as less valuable the Aboriginal person who lay in the gutter, broken by unimaginable grief and the liquor that deadened its pain. Yet even at the end of the 20th century, the prospect of coming too near to such pain could terrify us: were we to do so, our lives might be altered forever and that might be more than our sensitivities could bear.

Added to this fear was the one engendered by a powerful section of the Australian community – that, were white Australia to admit to what it had done to Aboriginal peoples and continued to do, we might all have to deliver up our homes and backyards as restitution. Aboriginal peoples were accusing us of the crime of genocide. They were claiming that their sovereignty had never been ceded. They wanted self-determination and they wanted their sacred lands returned to them. To listen to them too closely, to feel for their plight too empathically could result in overturning the country's system of law and order and, indeed, the whole notion of our nationhood which we had taken always taken for granted. Although we have been reminded that John Woolman's sensitivity to the sufferings of slaves shocked the socks off the Quaker establishment of his day because he suggested measures that could upend the ramifications of a world economy based on slavery, Aboriginal demands for sovereignty and self-determination are still not well-received by a significant number of Australian Friends even today.

Heartfelt work on recognising the depth of our racist prejudices in the insidiousness of our 'whiteness'² and the ongoing struggles of Aboriginal Australians to achieve more than Third World conditions have stretched, for many of us, the work of reconciliation into two decades and beyond. Although this work has often been heartbreaking and humiliating, it has lessened what was once described as 'this

2 – a sociological term used in analysing the unconscious behaviours and attitudes of 'white people' in relation to those perceived as 'coloured', 'ethnic' and otherwise deviating from the norm of worthiness they believe they exemplify by being 'white' (i.e. perceived as being without colour).

whispering in our hearts'³ and has given us an infinitely broader perspective of how we belong in this country. It has also wrought in us the certain knowledge of a more inclusive kinship within a much greater Spirit.

Humanity as Top

Most of us have been familiar with the concept that, of creatures great and small, God made one and all – and there is an inclusive ‘us’ in there somewhere. But we put away such a childish belief when our science taught us that the human is simply another animal, that existence depends upon ‘survival of the fittest’ and that, our elevated position in relation to evolution confirms our licence to deprive other species of life. Now everything we do, in relation to the more-than-human world, proclaims our fundamental belief in a divinely ordained ‘right to life’ – despite all evidence to the contrary – which is acquired by virtue of being human. This is a belief that creates, supports and encourages our social systems and sends us scuttling in all directions to protect properties and prolong our lives under the justification of ‘the importance of stewardship’ and ‘only good sense’, but it does not sit well with the experience of divine kinship underpinning all Quaker practice. Were we to begin questioning this tacit belief in our own supremacy, we would have to begin to question the validity of the whole of our social system, too.

Friends and the more-than-human world

Some years ago, British Quaker Harvey Gillman suggested a more inclusive Spirit be permitted to broaden our perspective of this divine kinship.

3 – meaning that something is profoundly amiss. In 1842, as he drew to the end of a public lecture which was ‘perhaps the most sustained and intellectually powerful attack on Aboriginal rights ever mounted in early colonial Australia’, British born Richard Windeyer (1806–1847), journalist, barrister, agriculturalist and politician, unaccountably concluded with the extraordinary words, ‘How is it our minds are not satisfied? ... What means this whispering in the bottom of our hearts?’. Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (Allen and Unwin: St Leonards, Australia) 1998, p. 20–21.

And what if every leaf were a thought of God,
 and every bud thrusting forth from the mind of God,
 every blade of grass, every ring of wood, every note
 of every bird, reflections on the wing of every fly,
 moth, bee, sparrow, pigeon, heron and hawk,
 every growing thing and every passing thing,
 and falling thing and dying thing and stalk and leaf
 were thoughts of God exploding with green sap and grace?⁴

Sensitivity to animals is not new to Friends. Famously, John Woolman was moved to write,

I was early convinced in my mind that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator and learns to exercise true justice and goodness, not only towards all men but also towards the brute creatures. That as the mind was moved on an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible Being, by the same principle it was moved to love him in all his manifestations in the visible world. That as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animals and sensitive creatures, to say we love God as unseen and at the same time exercise cruelty towards the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from him, was a contradiction in itself.⁵

Not content with theological concepts about the sanctity of animal life, Woolman was prepared to go the hard yards, literally, to enact his beliefs. On the rough Atlantic crossing that brought him to London Yearly Meeting to plead Quaker support for the abolition of slavery, Woolman seemed more concerned about the conditions of a crate-load of bedraggled hens than he was about his own discomfort.⁶ Having made himself unpopular with London Yearly Meeting elders by his anti-slavery message, he set off on foot for York, rather than contribute

4 Harvey Gillman, 'And What If' *The Friend*, 18 August, 1995.

5 John Woolman (1720) *Faith and Practice*, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (1988) p. 115.

6 John Woolman, *The journal of John Woolman and a plea for the poor: the spiritual autobiography of the great colonial Quaker*, J.G. Whittier Edition Text, Secaucus NJ (The Citadel Press; 1961) pp. 204–205.

to the burden of enslaved coach-horses⁷. No doubt weakened by the ordeal, he took ill with the smallpox and soon died.

Anna Sewell's Quaker heart swelled with compassion as she witnessed the treatment the horses of her time⁸ were subjected to. More than any other author, she changed our ways of regarding these beasts and perhaps animals in general with her much loved classic, *Black Beauty*.

The 19th century Quaker authors, William and Mary Howitt, were active in what was a forerunner to today's Animal Liberation Movement and were among early British vegetarians who felt it wrong to eat those among God's creatures which have pleading eyes. Compassion for animals and the world these creatures share with us has led many Friends to become ardent vegetarians. This stance does rather beg the question of whether or not such compassion should be extended to the plant kingdom, too!

In the mid-20th century, the concern of individual Quakers about the potential for planetary devastation as a result of the nuclear industry's activities, in particular its war-orientated aspects, founded what came to be known as 'Greenpeace'. This organisation has more recently directed many of its activities towards preventing further encroachment on the endangered existence of marine creatures that would otherwise be out of the sight and mind of many of us.

In the late 1980s Friends supported a movement instigated by the World Council of Churches called 'Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation' which later inspired movements within Britain Yearly Meeting and various American Yearly Meetings. These have been influential in bringing environmental concerns before the wider body of Friends.

Inspired by Buddhist Joanna Macy's 1980s 'despair and empowerment' work around fear of a nuclear holocaust, many Friends re-nourished themselves through her 'Council of All Beings' concept in the 1990s. The Council addressed the fear that the Earth was in imminent danger of annihilation and encouraged participants to speak

7 Woolman (1961) pp. 211–212

8 1820–1878

on behalf of voiceless aspects of the Earth – water, the soil, specific animals and plants. However, what had the potential for developing a new, spiritually inspired, shamanistic perspective with the power to challenge old paradigms frequently emphasised scientifically-derived information about the more-than-human world, including doom-and-gloom predictions. Councils sometimes descended into little more than recruitment drives for various environmental campaigns.

Creating a new paradigm

Invariably these movements have been instigated from our human point of view – from the heartfelt pity for ‘the brute creatures’ felt by John Woolman and Anna Sewell – right down to fear that the Earth’s systems were about to buckle under and that we’d better do something to shape up our behaviour or we’d find ourselves being shipped out. Some Yearly Meetings, Australia among them, are working towards understanding what a Testimony to our relationship with the Earth might mean and what we are wanting to ‘discover about what the more-than-human world requires of us’. However, so powerfully have Green Friends been assailed by the plethora of science-based directives about how better to ‘care for the Earth’ – all of them derived from the human-centred concern to fix things up before we get hurt – that this science-based body of wisdom has generally been accepted as gospel. It has been difficult, to put it mildly, for us to engage with the more-than-human world in order to listen and hear and so discover *its* perspective, because of our fear of going beyond what is acceptable to and proven by what we perceive as scientific authority.

While Woolman’s statement will continue to provide us with a timeless meditation of great profundity, it is Harvey Gillman’s holy equation that demands our urgent response, challenging us, as a body of Friends, to consider that ‘that of God’ might also be found within the more-than-human world. In the same way that male Friends assumed they were respectfully inclusive of women (because they may not have acted with as much obvious violence as did men from other sectors

of society), and that most of us in the Society of Friends in Australia assumed that we were free of racism because we had never officially stolen Aboriginal children from their parents, nor (it is believed) been part of massacring gangs that decimated the Aboriginal populations, it is also possible that we assume ourselves to be kindly disposed towards the more-than-human world because we love our pets, are not ‘cruel to animals’, are vegetarian and generally ‘reduce our carbon footprint’, or, if we lean to the less specific but more poetic, ‘walk lightly on the Earth’.

To take Gillman’s proposition seriously, however, we need to do more than that. In the same way that Quakerism (if not always all Quakers) has always responded from certain knowledge of that of God in all humanity, we shall have to become so convinced of the existence of the divine equality of being in the more-than-human world that we base all our decisions and actions upon this truth. Creating this new paradigm will not be achieved in comfortable stages. It will instigate an upheaval of infinitely greater revolutionary potential than universal female suffrage and the complete abolition of slavery rolled into one sudden paradigm shift.

Perhaps, therefore, it is time to look at what we really mean when we employ our much loved cliché.

‘that of God within...’

For me, ‘that of God within’ means ‘the soul’. If I am to answer that of God in another, whether beloved or stranger, I must by-pass the mask their personality presents to me and direct my focus to that exquisite, sacred, timeless essence within them – their divine and immortal soul – which defines and directs the God-given purpose for their existence. Only when I have done this are they and I truly connected within that life and power that removes fear of the other and the consequent concern about who is superior to whom and who is in control. Even if for but a precious fleeting moment, here each of us knows what it is like to be equal under God. Quakers have a remarkable reputation of being good at interacting in such a way because of our service with the

poor, dispossessed, reviled, and cast out. However, if we are honest, many of us, myself very much included, sometimes can't be bothered, are too busy, are too fearful or, to varying degrees, are simply repelled by outward appearances.

‘...everyone’

This word is universally accepted as applying only to humanity – ‘every human person’. Gillman’s proposition suggests we must be bolder. As did those men Friends moved by love for their women counterparts, and the abolitionists impelled by compassion for the hapless slave, we will have to go out on a limb for the sake of every leaf, bud, blade of grass, ring of wood, bird note, and reflection on the wings of flies, moths, bees, sparrows, pigeons, herons, hawks – those voiceless aspects of Creation that often can only make themselves heard when we attend to their presence. Can we extend the use of ‘everyone’ to mean them too? And what about those ‘creations’, like water and rocks, which our science once taught us were ‘non-living’? – I understand that there is now some uncertainty within the scientific camp as to where this living line should be drawn. Hopefully, in our exploring the possible extensions to what may include ‘that of God’, we can feel a little freer of the fear of being found to be ‘wrong’.

One of our difficulties in considering that ‘that of God’ might reside within the more-than-human world is our theology of the ‘soul’. A scientifically unprovable concept, its popular acceptability has dwindled somewhat since the lid was blown on the business of saving souls for Christ. Friends tend now to talk about the ‘Spirit’ but, to me, this is not the same thing at all. Many of us have been brought up in the Christian belief that souls reside solely within humans because we are made in the image of a God who is human – and, until recently, white, Christian and male. This, of course, rules out animals and others travelling to Heaven as immortal souls or, at the very least, possessing ‘that of God’ within them. Whether we like it or not, our Society’s world perspective has been fashioned by a creation story

that has ‘man’ holding a dominant position over the ‘brute creatures’. Nineteenth century Darwinism has only ever confirmed this story by establishing humans at the pinnacle of the evolutionary process.

If, at this point, we would like to contemplate an alternative view of human life, the indigenous perspective seems to offer us a good place to start. Aboriginal Australians are not alone among the indigenous peoples of the world in traditionally believing that when a human dies, their soul returns to kindred aspects of the natural world – goannas, mountains, waterfalls, trees and so on – in an eternal interwoven rhythm that spiritually enriches the Earth.

In pondering what this different perspective could mean for us, we well may wonder which perspective – theirs or ours – holds the greater potential for sustaining life on our planet!

Another major difficulty is that we tend to be choosy regarding those we seek to interact with. The Decade of Reconciliation was a time when, often for the first time in their lives, Friends were enabled to meet an Aboriginal person. Indigenous people who accepted the invitation to come to our Meetings were generally diplomats of a high order and, while speaking their truth, managed to make us feel better about ourselves as well as positively disposed towards Aboriginal people. But put us among a group of militant Aboriginal activists shouting, ‘Land rights now!’ and cataloguing, for the benefit of our education, two centuries of genocidal atrocities, and our view of Aboriginality was not nearly so glowing. Just so with male-female issues, as most women will attest.

And just so with our relations with the more-than-human world. We may find the idea of a great rainforest spiritually uplifting but be revolted by the bloodsucking leeches we will invariably encounter within its reality. Spiritual kinship with our faithful dog or, on an energetic level, with creatures like the wolf, the lion, or the eagle, which have been ennobled by our romantic idea of ‘shamanism’, or with plants of ancient spiritual significance, like the rose, the giant redwood, the ‘ancient’ oak, or the *Bodhi* tree, might provide

a somewhat alluring notion, but we are less likely to be attracted to the suggestion that this divine kinship include cockroaches, malaria-carrying mosquitoes, plague locusts, the slimy algal growth near the garbage bin, the invasive weed that defies all our chemical efforts to eradicate it, or the bacterium, *Staphylococcus aureus*. We want only what makes us comfortable, enriches our personal aesthetic taste, or excites our desire for the grand and exotic. Yet, Harvey Gillman has made no such distinction and appears to invite us to consider that God is in these, the least desirable of our brethren, too.

It seems to me that we cannot justify picking and choosing and still remain spiritually honest. Jesus is reputed to have said, ‘But I say unto you which hear, love your enemies and do good to them that hate you.’⁹ Whether or not we consider ourselves Christian, as Quakers we know that such a philosophy and its practice make good *spiritual* sense. It is upon this, which we consider to be some sort of universal truth, that Quakers have based 350 years of rather wondrous non-violent action. While Jesus may indeed have had only human beings in mind when he spoke of enemies, today we often refer to such things as diseases and weather extremes as inimical to our wellbeing. We have also become familiar with the concept of the enemy being us, ourselves, and being created by our own fear. With its capacity to cripple our ability to love, our fear is indeed our enemy until we discover that everything we fear shares divine equality with us.

Our fear of the more-than-human is no different, in essence, to our innate fear of those we do not know; those whose ways are strange, whose languages are incomprehensible, whose existences seem to threaten our own, and whom we have often been carefully taught to hate, like powerful politicians with destructive policies, ‘illegal’ asylum seekers, pandemic viruses, deadly snakes, and spiders in the outside toilet. To the extent that we have the resources to do so, we focus an extraordinary amount of our very limited time on Earth protecting, extending and attempting to enrich our lives by opposing, stifling and

9 *Luke 6:27*

intentionally killing other life-forms. We justify this because they are not in human form.

In the end, what we fear, of course, is our individual demise, our own dying and death. We know it is inevitable but, in our heart of hearts, hope that we, at least, may avoid it. Fear of perceived violence or threatened attack, instinctive within us all, reminds us of how potentially imminent our death is. This may be understandable, but we know as Quakers that this does not resonate with our spiritual mandate. The evolutionary impetus of Love has called us to take the higher, and humbler, position of accepting that the purpose of our physical life is not necessarily to preserve it at all costs. Life has been given us that we might offer it in the service of Love, no matter what the cost. This is the way Quakers have practised nonviolence for the past three and a half centuries.

SEEING ANIMALS DIFFERENTLY

Communicating across the species divide

Those of us who have observed how a domesticated cat can mother a fluffy yellow duckling, or have stood transfixed at the sight of a knees-up celebration of life among donkeys and alpacas sharing the same field, or have gaped in wonderment at a film documenting the delight-filled play between wild polar bears and husky dogs, will know that communicating across the species divide is not only possible but also natural. During a season of firestorms that devastated great areas of the southern Australian state of Victoria in early 2009, the photograph of a wild species reaching out, in the extremity of its distress, to humanity touched the world. Emerging from an area of smouldering bushland, ‘Sam’, a severely burnt female koala, held out her paw to David Tree, a volunteer fire-fighter, and ‘asked’ for a drink from his water-bottle.

I find it ironic that, as I write, a world-wide alert is warning us, on the hour, of the dangers of a potentially deadly pandemic called ‘swine flu’. We are told that it is a virus which was once happy to use pigs

as host but has now mutated and crossed the species divide to invade humanity. Perhaps we can learn from its determination to expand its boundaries and do a little mutating of sorts ourselves for I suspect we shall never perceive relationship with the more-than-human world as more than poetic pie-in-the-sky until we learn how to communicate within an extended kinship.

From the spiritual perspective, this is not a new idea and it seems as if such ability may once have been regarded as a sign of high saintliness. It is no coincidence that the author of one of the rare prayers with which Friends, as a body, can resonate – ‘Lord make me an instrument of thy peace’ – was one who famously communicated with animals. While St. Francis and the birds may, for some, be little more than a sentimental image of kitsch sainthood, there seems to be little doubt that Francis’ sensitivity towards animals was part of a muscular awareness that divinity infuses every minute aspect of Creation, and it was an awareness that he was impelled to act upon. In the little book, *The Way of a Pilgrim*, its unknown Russian author recounts his experiences of learning ‘the unceasing prayer of the heart’¹⁰ and finds that he gradually comes to understand more of the wisdom found in the *Philokalia* – Orthodox Christianity’s great work of spiritual direction.

As I began to pray now with my heart, everything around me was so delightfully transformed: the trees, the grass, the birds, the ground, the air, the light – all seemed to proclaim that they exist for the sake of man and bear witness to the love of God for man. All creation prays to God and sings His praises. From this I understood what the *Philokalia* calls a ‘knowledge of the language of all creation,’ and I saw how it is possible for man to communicate with all of God’s creatures.¹¹

This ability to communicate across the species-divide is not reserved

10 – as a response to St Paul’s directive to ‘pray at all times in the Spirit and without ceasing’ (*Ephesians* 6:18 and *1 Thessalonians* 5:17).

11 Savin, Olga (transl.) *The Way of a Pilgrim*, Shambhala Publications, Boston, Massachusetts (1991) p. 43. It is thought to have been written in the 1850s. It was first published in the 1870s.

for the privileged spiritual few. It is innate in us all, as devoted pet owners, those who work in partnership with animals and those who are passionate gardeners the world over know. The medium of communication is our often disregarded intuition, which could just as easily be called ‘the Spirit’; the communication occurs between the essence of each being, which could as easily be called ‘the soul’, or ‘that of God’. And, of course, because communication is a two-way street, we may learn from the other things which very much surprise us!

That something infinitely free of the constriction of form cannot be proved by our scientific methods does not prove its non-existence, as evidenced to us by ‘the amazing fact of Quaker Worship’.¹² But Friends’ historical heritage has also included interfacing with the exponential growth of modern science in an increasingly technical age,¹³ so it is not surprising if talk of ‘soul-communication’ seems airy-fairy to some contemporary Friends and somewhat peripheral to the traditional Quaker ways of establishing the Peaceable Kingdom. Yet we are already well-practised in communicating between souls via the wordless language we hear spoken in the deepest, stillest parts of our Meetings for Worship, the language that often tells us what we wish to hear least, or that perhaps upends for us all that we have assumed was right and proper for our unavoidably arrogant and ego-led lives. It is the language our peacemakers have always used in times of strife as it returns warring polarities to a state of harmony. It is the language used by the voice of the Spirit which gathers up all who would open to its reasoning and its Love. This is undoubtedly the language heard – and used – by those saints of long ago who communed with the animals in their own tongue, the language of our soul which is directed to and receives from the soul of the other – no matter who or what the other may be. It is, of course, the very same language used by indigenous peoples since humanity began.

12 – the title of George Gorman’s 1973 Swarthmore Lecture.

13 We should not forget that the document now referred to as ‘the Quaker Peace Testimony’ was written within months of the founding of the Royal Society in London.

Vegetarianism – an indigenous perspective

Many Friends see vegetarianism as *sine qua non* for caring for the Earth. It is true that vegetarianism can be a political statement against the way most animals are processed for human consumption. However, regarding vegetarianism as inherently moral and potentially planet-saving tends to disrespect, or at least ignore, the traditional meat-eating of all the indigenous peoples I am aware of. Indeed, these peoples who, we are now aware, live in intimate and harmonious interrelationship with their animals and the minutiae of their environment, are convinced of the life renewal – for themselves and the world around them – that comes from eating meat. In other words, they are convinced that eating the flesh of animals is what the animals want and have asked them to do! Clearly, in discovering what our relationship with the more-than-human-world requires of us, we should be contemplating something much deeper than simply the pros and cons of eating meat – something much more profound and educative than statistics about social equity, land use and greenhouse gas production.

The Yanyuwa people and the dugong

So closely identified with the dugong and sea turtles are the Yanyuwa people of Borroloola, in Australia's Gulf of Carpentaria, that all aspects of being human are likened to these creatures.

Whereas English has but one name for the dugong, the Yanyuwa use an extraordinary and complex range of quite different words – *nouns* rather than adjectives – to name this animal. These names for the dugong accord with its state of being – its gender, its precise age, where it comes from, whether it is alone or with others. If it is female, these names will convey if it is a young cow not yet ready to breed, a pregnant cow with her first calf, a cow with a small calf, a cow with a large calf in tow, a non-lactating cow still in company with a large calf, a mature cow of calf-bearing years but without a calf, or a cow past her ability to reproduce and so on. Similar distinctions will be made for the male dugong, again using very different words. Most of these names

for the dugong are replicated when the Yanyuwa speak of themselves, so that a dominant bull dugong may be identified with a ‘cleverman’ of the tribe and a young cow not yet ready to breed will be referred to as if she were a teenage girl, and so on.

And that’s just for starters. There are many other Yanyuwa words that reflect upon the abilities and temperaments of the dugong so that the people can learn how best to comport themselves within their society and within their environment. Each of these words denoting a particular dugong quality conjures a whole world of detailed knowledge about that individual animal and its relationship with the tribe in ways that sustain empirical spiritual understanding about dugongs and the Yanyuwa people over thousands of years.

We might have expected the Yanyuwa to have deified the dugong by placing it beyond becoming an item on the menu, but the hunting of dugong for the Yanyuwa is a deeply important, spiritual affair and one of the chief foci of their lives. The strict rules and ceremonies ascribed to its butchering and the distribution of its flesh – according to the instructions given to them in the Dreaming by the Spirit Ancestors of the dugong – reflect this.

The Yanyuwa relationship with their sea turtles is similarly complex and compendious.¹⁴

The kinship system with all creation

And then there is the networking of the Yanyuwa ‘skin’ kinship system which connects each individual member of the Yanyuwa tribe to ‘... every leaf, every blade of grass, every bird, every fly, moth, bee, sparrow, pigeon, heron and hawk, every growing thing, and passing thing and dying thing ...’ as well to as rocks, clouds, weather patterns, spirits, sun, moon and constellations, even dinosaurs, in familial relationship.

14 Bradley, John James, ‘Li-Anthawirriyarra, people of the sea: Yanyuwa relation with their maritime environment’ Part 2, Ph.D. Thesis, (Northern Territory University, Darwin, 1997) Chapter 8 ‘Underwater Country, Sea Grass, Dugong and Turtles’, pp. 217–272. A fuller translation of *Li-Anthawirriyarra* is ‘those people whose spiritual and cultural heritage comes from the sea’.

Given them by the Ancestor Spirits of the Dreaming, kinship systems provide an Aboriginal people with clear understanding of what they are permitted and not permitted to eat and with an ordered way of relating to all other Aboriginal peoples. This takes the guess-work out of whom one may and may not marry and the appropriate ways to relate to this newborn baby (who may be one's grandfather) and to that old lady (who may be one's daughter). Thus, hypothetically, one can say, 'I call that tree, "Aunty", those "Morning Glory" clouds, "Grandfather" and the olive python I call, "Mother". The Brolga is me so I call her, "Sister". Because you – who come from a tribe many days to the south and whose spoken language I do not understand – are Brolga, too, you are my "Sister". Come, let me show you how you are related within my tribe and within my *country*.'

Indigenous meat-eating, then, is far less a result of what we have perceived as their 'primitivism' than a part of their spiritual kinship with what they eat. It may indeed be the sort of relationship that gave rise to, or at least permission for, partaking of the body and blood of Christ in the Christian Mass. It is worth considering that seeking the sort of intimate relationships with the more-than-human world in ways that, at the very least, honour the example set by indigenous peoples such as the Yanyuwa may hold greater ability to save the planet than our arbitrary rules of abstinence based on the latest scientific assessment of the planet's health, or the sort of sentimentality (and arrogance?) that makes it difficult for us to receive guidance from the more-than-human world and to treat it other than as some sort of incompetent invalid.

The Peaceable Kingdom

Many Friends will be familiar with Edward Hicks'¹⁵ numerous 'Peaceable Kingdom' paintings which illustrate Isaiah's vision of harmony between the polarities that divide Creation –

15 Edward Hicks, an American Quaker (1780–1849).

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them...

And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.¹⁶

Whether Friends will help realise the New World of the Peaceable Kingdom depends very much upon how, within the current world of our reality, we see ourselves – individually and as a spiritual body – and upon what we perceive our Spirit-ordained mandate as Quakers to be. Will we continue to see ourselves as above the need to learn from other beings, both human and more-than-human because we are human (and Friend?)? Will we, therefore, see ourselves as enjoined to ‘fight’ the evils and injustices which *we* perceive to be ‘out there’ – a practice we should know, from our peace studies, serves only to maintain and strengthen the energies of what prevents peace?

Or can we allow ourselves to become as Isaiah’s little child, instinctively knowing the spiritual world as reality rather than concept? Can we intuitively listen to the language of Creation, and *truly* ‘answer that of God in everything’? This will involve us opening, in accepting trust, to those spiritual dimensions which we have assumed do not exist – or which may seem hostile to our physical well-being, or personal comfort.

Instead of feeling that we must always shore ourselves up, materially and emotionally, by taking, can we begin to learn from the more-than-human realms how to give as generously as they do? Can we come to see ourselves as humble dwellers on that ‘holy mountain’ with the mandate to dissolve all polarities with the inclusiveness of divine kinship so that the wonder of the ever-changing, ever recombining kaleidoscopic patterns of the Peaceable Kingdom may prevail?



¹⁶ *Isaiah* 11:6, 8–9.

About the author...

Wilma Davidson lives in Canberra (ACT), Australia, but was born in Scotland and emigrated over 40 years ago. She is a counsellor, massage therapist and writer of short fiction. Wilma is a member of Canberra Regional Meeting and also a member of ACT Animal Liberation.

7 *Guidance in co-existence with other than human animals*

Wilma Davidson

WHAT FOLLOWS IS a personal reflection, the journey in how I hope to understand in Quaker terms the absoluteness of being only one species of many and the responsibilities this carries for me. You will of course go through your own process.

I have been a pacifist, human rights activist and animal rights activist for most of my adult life and I have found on the whole that the world accepts my right to my views. However, it is interesting for me that many pacifists eat meat or use goods that require the killing of animals and a few animal rights activists may even use violence in their actions.

I have been involved with Quakers but a few years, although many friends and colleagues in the peace movement are also Quakers. I became a member in 2008, being drawn mainly by acceptance of ‘that of God in us all’ and how the Quaker testimonies as a personal life model made such perfect sense. It surprised me therefore that within the Quaker community the views on and relationships with non-human animals are wide and varied. The testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community and Equality helps me with my thinking and being and certainly helps me to appreciate the importance of cross-species relationships and to try to understand their complexities.

When I wake up and see the King Parrots in the trees, I marvel at how long they have lived here and how they maintain their life given

the changes we have made. Like many of the species in abundance before colonisation, it is a miracle they survived the bullet and the rapping of their home. Then I am made aware of my two hungry pusses.

So many times I hear about the damage done by cats to the native fauna. Yes they do, but little in comparison to what has happened since the boats arrived – arrived with cats on board. Vegan acquaintances tell me my cats should be vegan, but I don't want them to be me any more than I want you to be me. I don't need to eat meat, cats do.

After the Canberra bushfires in January 2003 destroyed the home of our local mob of kangaroos I was amazed to see the mob return. For the past few years it has lived between the tree stumps and on the sometimes grassy hill. I lived in fear of the day the grassy hill will be wanted, and the argument that the kangaroos will have to go... and that time has come. The land that once was bush is now being cleared for housing and the kangaroos will be moved further up the hill or closer to the roads. I wonder if the developers and purchasers will remember the kangaroos lived there first. We will hear stories of their overpopulation but little of the destruction of habitat. Again, as happens regularly in Canberra, the Bush Capital, those who want will take from those who were here first.

What has this to do with simplicity, peace, integrity, community and equality I hear you say?

Quite a lot! Or maybe only quite a lot in *my* reading and understanding of the testimonies and how they work for me. It may be very different for you. And therein lies my struggle. I want you to see what I see, feel what I feel, and understand what I understand. For me to accept that of God in everyone, I need to accept that for you equality may not include a sharing of the habitat, or that community can include both independent and companion animals.

My community is a community of people, companion animals and local fauna. They belong here as much as I do and are much of my attraction to this place.

We have a new *Advices and Queries* that includes both UK and Australian input. Paragraph 44 tells us:

All life is interrelated. Each individual plant and animal has its own needs, and its importance to others. Many Australian species and other species worldwide are now extinct and countless more are endangered. Do you treat all life with respect, recognising a particular obligation to those animals we breed and maintain for our own use and enjoyment? In order to secure the survival of all, including ourselves, are you prepared to change your ideas to your environment and every living thing in it?

For me to behave with integrity, I don't see a need to kill animals to eat or dress myself. However, your personal integrity may demand different decisions from mine.

John Woolman (*Journal* p. 8) professes this simple theory:

I kept steadily to meetings; spent first day afternoons chiefly in reading the Scriptures and other good books, and was early convinced in my mind that true religion consisted in an inward life. Wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator and learns to exercise true justice and goodness, not only towards all men, but also towards brute creatures.

That, as the mind was moved by an upward principle to God's love as invisible incomprehensible being so, by the same principle, it was moved to love him in all his manifestations in the visible world. That, as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal sensible creatures, to say we love God as unseen and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from him was a contradiction in itself.

As Quakers we find it difficult to understand the notion of 'fighting' for peace. War is war, killing is killing. I don't believe someone's son or daughter needs to be killed for my 'freedom'. Likewise is true for the offspring of other animals. Many years ago when I became a vegetarian, the reason was simple: I could not kill so I could not condone someone killing just for me to eat.

This issue like most issues for Quakers, is one of discernment. And through this process of discernment the way will become clear.



About the author...

Gracia Fay Ellwood was born in 1938 in the Puget Sound area of Washington and spent her formative years on a traditional family farm. It was set amid natural beauty in which a divine beauty at times called to her. Farm life also awakened a sense of compassionate kinship with baby animals, feelings that, as animals grew to adulthood, evaporated under the cultural pressures that named them as commodities.

It was not until she encountered principled vegetarians in the 1970s and 1980s that she again opened her heart to farmed animals and began to study and think about them in a disciplined way. In 1981 she became a member of the Society of Friends, and a few years later, began to extend to animals the Quaker commitment to nonviolence and integrity based in humans' and animals' shared participation in the Spirit who sustains all life. She is presently active in the Animal Kinship committee of Orange Grove Meeting, California, particularly as editor of the monthly online journal The Peaceable Table. AK also distributes her booklet Are Animals Our Neighbours?

Ellwood received her MA in religion and literature from the University of Chicago, and her Ph.D. in the philosophy of religion at Claremont Graduate University. She taught religious studies for a number of years at California State University, Long Beach. She is the author of The Uttermost Deep: The Challenge Of Near-Death Experiences and other books and essays.

She finds relaxation and renewal in Baroque music, the writings of Jane Austen, and nature walks, as well as in daily prayer. She lives with her spouse in Krotona, a vegetarian community near Ojai, California. Since 1995 she has been a member of a small religious guild, The Order of the Cross and the Grail.

8 Taking the adventure

Gracia Fay Bouwman Ellwood

ON THE THIRD Sunday afternoon of each month, the members and supporters of the Animal Kinship (AK) Committee (sponsor of *The Peaceable Table*) gather to discuss business. Since most of us come directly from Meeting for Worship, a little refreshment is in order first. With much help from our clerk Kate's culinary skills, this potluck luncheon has evolved into a feast of abundant, colorful, and luscious gifts from Earth's bounty. Looking at this wonderful abundance of good things, and the caring and enthusiastic fellow Friends seated around the table, I always feel an immense gratitude that was virtually unknown to me in the days before I came to embrace a 'restricted' vegan diet. A feast is more than a meal; it is a refreshing communal celebration of plenty and life and joy and love. Especially when no innocent blood was shed in its preparation!

Yet one of our main motivations as Friends, as with any spiritually-oriented vegan, is a commitment to Simplicity of lifestyle, to taking no more than our share in a world in which our planet is being devastated and millions do not have enough to sustain life adequately, while others take more than they need. How can this crucial life-principle be

compatible with the rightness of sitting down to so abundant a feast?

Knights and dragons

A complex of images that suggests an answer to this question, and other related questions, can be found in an unlikely place: the stories of King Arthur's knights and the 'Quest for the Holy Grail'. That this source is unlikely hardly needs emphasis. To begin with, the stories appear, confusingly, in a number of different versions, with varying implications. Even more problematic, in most of the tales the exploitation of animals is taken for granted. The knights' chargers are slaves controlled by bit and bridle; hunting, especially of deer and wild pigs, may be frequent; virtually every feast is centered in a corpse. The stories have touches of anti-Semitism. Furthermore, the whole cycle is heavily male-centered, with female figures tending to be either dangerous temptresses or sorceresses, or helpless damsels-in-distress. Problems are usually solved with the sword.

Then what is left? Quite a lot, actually!

The Arthuriad took shape in a medieval world where civilization and order still had a shaky hold, where justice and peace were dreams – dreams that coalesced around valiant heroes who cared about the defenseless and could challenge the evil knights and the dragons of chaos who threatened to crush them. What with widespread subjection of women, with enforced marriage and rape by marauding knights or Norsemen, most damsels *were* probably in distress much of the time. In general, the poor of both sexes were subject to the casual violence of the powerful.

Modern damsels

In our culture, concepts of women as frail beings needing protection and control are rightly seen by most as false and harmful. But that there actually are millions of defenseless beings in the clutches of agribusiness's robber barons – including damsels in terrible distress in dairy and egg factories – is indisputable. The victims are many, the

champions few.

Does this mean we cast ourselves in the role of the Knights-in-Shining-Armor who ride out to give battle to the dragons and blood-splattered oppressors? Well, no and yes. A minority of animal defenders evidently do, in a semi-literal manner: their sword-thrusts are shouts of abuse and violent phone calls, harassment of abusers' families, even bombing threats – sometimes carried out. Unhappily, this conspicuous minority is often seized upon by the press, eager to present a dramatic image of animal defenders as a violent lot. With friends like these... we need to proceed with Care.

Without seeing ourselves as sword-wielding warriors, we can still find the knight-in-armor image helpful. It can inspire an activist not oversupplied with courage who faces, with beating heart, the prospect of civil disobedience in a literal rescue – or even just speaking up to her Church, Meeting, Temple, or family members on behalf of the animals. On the other side, the drama implicit in the images can be helpful in enabling us to get some distance between ourselves and our mission, perhaps laugh at ourselves a little. Dragons, however terrifying, are mythological beasts... and our Black Knights are not what they seem, either. The victims are very much physical beings, in physical chains, but not so the oppressors. Hidden in the heart of the hardest and greediest robber baron is the divine Light, the seed of transformation. Our war, as St. Paul says, is not against flesh and blood but against the principalities and powers, against enslaving institutions and prejudices entrenched throughout society.

Behind the Black Visor

Remarkably, one of the narratives of the Arthurian epic already exemplifies this truth in a powerful way. It is the cycle of stories about Balin, together with his beloved brother Balan (the names suggest they are twins), a Knight of the Round Table. Sir Balin is a zealous but undisciplined warrior determined to be the Bravest Fighter on behalf of the Worthiest Cause. In the first story he comes under the spell of

an accursed sword; inflamed by a desire for its power, he seizes it. The curse follows him: later, pursuing an evil knight into and even through the hallways of the Castle of the Grail, he bursts into the holy chapel where the sacred Chalice and Spear are kept. When the guardian of the Grail, the Fisher King, tries to block his intrusion, Balin grabs the Spear and with it wounds the King. The result of this Dolorous Blow is that all the countryside for miles around withers into a perpetual Waste Land; furthermore, the castle and the chalice disappear from ordinary sight, withdrawn into another plane of being.

In a still later story Balin approaches a strange castle and is challenged to fight its champion, a black-armored knight with no identifying device on his shield. Unable to bear being thought a coward, Balin borrows a shield himself and gives battle. Both opponents fight valiantly, finally giving one another mortal wounds. But before they die, Balin raises the visor covering his enemy's face. What he sees is the face of his brother.

Today's Knights-in-Shining-Armor – the small handful of animal defenders whose hearts burn to save all the billions of innocents from hellish suffering and death at the hands of animal agribusiness – are dwarfed many times over by their giant opponents. Imagine a Friend or church member trying to persuade her spiritual community, which may contain perhaps a hundred people out of the three hundred million in the USA, to show compassion to animals by not eating them. He or she may be repeatedly blocked by a few other members, otherwise good people who refuse to see the monstrous evil they are championing. Another example: Small groups doing a midnight open rescue know they can save perhaps twenty hens out of a hellhole containing two hundred thousand – and they know what will happen to all the others. In so grotesquely unequal a situation, with its painful frustrations, how does a defender bear in mind that the human beings whose callous and violent acts they are opposing are, under their visors, her own sisters and brothers? How does she hold this knowledge in her heart so that she can resist the temptation to hate and attack them even in

her thoughts?

The Chalice of Light

The Arthurian stories contain another important theme, the Quest for the Holy Grail, which can help us meet this formidable challenge. The background of the story is the Waste Land, which had lain desolate for years. Linked to this situation of death was a mysterious seat at the Round Table, the Siege Perilous. It had long stood empty until finally taken by the High Prince Galahad, young offspring of the tragic affair of the enchanted Sir Lancelot and the Princess Elaine of the Grail Castle.

That same day, the Feast of Pentecost at Camelot, the knights all heard a peal of thunder and saw a blaze of celestial light, in the midst of which appeared the Holy Grail. Awestruck with wonder, when it vanished they each vowed to go on quest to find it. Most of them wandered about, distracted by other adventures, and some never returned. In one version it was only three, whose dedication to the cause was deeper, that were able not only to find but to enter the elusive Grail Castle. Sir Lancelot, whose heart was divided between Queen Guinevere and the Quest, fell into a deep trance outside the castle, and got no further. Sir Bors and Sir Percival entered the castle hall and saw the procession of the glowing Grail and Spear, but were struck dumb and deprived of initiative. Only Sir Galahad was able to act, asking the crucial question: 'Whom does the Grail serve?' He was also able to take the chalice and look into it. The blaze of light from the heart of the Cup permeated and galvanised him, and he was translated from the human plane into the Light. He had 'achieved the Grail.' The wounded Grail King was healed, and the new life of Spring came at last to the Waste Land.

To will one thing

Although medieval readers apparently admired Sir Galahad, modern readers are likely to find him problematic. He is described as a magnificent knight, but he seems scarcely human; totally dedicated to

his mission to find and achieve the Grail, he has no friendly warmth, no weakness with which we can identify. His saying ‘My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure,’ needs translation if we are not to dismiss him as an ego-bound brat.

Who and what is this High Prince? We may find some help from Soren Kierkegaard’s line ‘Purity of heart is to will one thing.’ If we say that Sir Galahad’s strength is as the strength of ten because his heart is one, that oneness being intent on the Source of Light, we will begin to understand why he is the only knight who achieves the Grail. Like the child in the Peaceable Kingdom scene who leads the lion and plays over the adder’s den, Galahad represents the dimension of a human being that is linked to the Infinite. In a sense, he has always been gazing into the Divine Light, and thus is able to act with the Divine strength.

If we interpret the High Prince in this way, the image suggests that every action of ours to champion the victims of oppression and violence must also be our inner Galahad’s Quest for the Grail. Unless we are informed by and are intent on the Light or Love of God in all our work, we are in danger of succumbing to burnout or distraction. Worse, we may become like Sir Balin, assertive and well-intentioned, but undisciplined, blinded, and led astray by self-dramatizing passion. The result is calamity. But if we hold to the more difficult path of following the gleam of the Light within, we may begin to tap into its power to transform even the Waste Land, which our earth is rapidly becoming, back into the Garden of God.

Bread for the journey

We can now see the outlines of an answer to the question with which this essay began: how is the bounty of a feast to be held in balance with the modest fare appropriate for those who are all too aware of the distresses of the world around them? The feast has its place: from time to time, especially on Pentecost, the knights gather at the Round Table to enjoy abundance and good fellowship, to hear of some great deed, and to be available to the call. But feasts are relatively infrequent, and

when the call to adventure comes, one must be ready to leave behind things that may be good in themselves, to travel light. We remember that there are no supermarkets available to the adventuring knight. He or she cannot count on taking time out to look for whatever wild berries or herbs may particularly please the palate – and this knight is hardly about to seek out and kill an innocent creature for supper! He carries what food he can in his bag; she dines moderately. Those on Quest do not complain about plain food or inconvenience, because they have more crucial things in mind.

Let us take the adventure that is sent us.



About the author...

Marian Hussenbux lives near Birkenhead in Merseyside, Britain. She is a semi-retired translator and teacher of modern languages. As well as being the current clerk of Quaker Concern for Animals and editor of the newsletter, she is a school speaker for Animal Aid, an RSPCA volunteer and has been involved in supporting animal welfare and rights groups and campaigning on these issues since the 1970s. She is an elder of the Birkenhead Meeting.

Marian is also involved in Green Party work, and a member of Living Witness, formerly Quaker Green Action. A life member of the Christian Vegetarian Association UK, Marian has Jewish and Muslim members in her extended family and is committed to working for the animals from an interfaith perspective. She considers that a spiritually-based perception of the intrinsic value of other animals would add an important dimension to our work.

9 A Friendly perspective on our fellow beings

Marian Hussenbux

IN THIS ESSAY, we will outline some historical and current Quaker thinking on our relationship with our fellow animals and how an association was set up to attempt to focus the attention of Friends upon the sufferings of other sentient beings. This group, having undergone some changes in its name, is presently called ‘Quaker Concern for Animals’ and is what is termed a ‘linked informal group’ within the Religious Society of Friends.

Quakers

Our Protestant denomination, which sprang up in England in the seventeenth century, is devoid of hierarchy, so there are no Papal Bulls or Synod motions to prescribe beliefs or practices. Adherents of The Religious Society of Friends place great importance on personal experience and the individual conscience. We are an inclusive people who seek ‘that of God in everyone’ – symbolised in the concept of the ‘Inner Light’. And that Light shines on all beings.

We try to live by certain precepts we call *testimonies*, of which the best known is the *Testimony to Peace*, from which arises the characteristic Quaker pacifism. The integration of daily life and the

Testimonies is described in this excerpt from *The Nature and Mission of the church*:

Quakers claim to be a people of the presence of Christ, a claim which implies a realised eschatology. This should be seen not only in church life but also in the quality of the lives we live in the world, both individually and as a people. It is from this understanding that our distinctive testimonies – peace, justice, integrity, equality and simplicity – come. They are not a random selection of ethical principles; all these testimonies demonstrate what life is like when God reigns.

The testimonies themselves, according to Stephen Cox, of Purley and Sutton Area Meeting, ‘sprang up from those individuals who experienced the Inner Light within themselves’ and ‘... this is the spiritual core from which action may spring’.

It is interesting and significant that how we respond to the testimonies is expected to develop in relation to current societal practices and ways of experiencing life. In *Quaker Faith & Practice*, Chris Lawson wrote:

Finding ways of expressing the testimonies that are relevant to present times is a continuing challenge. Such expressions will not necessarily seem practical, tactful, sensible, and expedient or in line with some current vogue of thinking, for they are based on what seems right in an absolute sense of inner conviction.

Thinking back to how Friends reacted to the concerns of John Woolman and other abolitionists, we are reminded that the concept of the equality of humankind, irrespective of nationality, creed, sex and colour of skin was not, for many years, considered either ‘practical, tactful, sensible, expedient or in line with some current vogue of thinking’. It was a concept diametrically opposed to the foundations on which European prosperity, directly or indirectly, rested.

Animals and Quakers

How does the relationship between humans and other animals feature in the Quaker movement? There are indeed precedents in the Religious Society of Friends for today’s concern for our defenceless

fellow creatures. The founder, George Fox, himself once criticised the theft of grain intended for the horses, saying he would rather the man had stolen from him. Hunting and hawking were, in the ‘Minutes of London Yearly Meeting’ of 1795, declared contrary to Quaker discipline with Friends asked to ‘... let our leisure be employed in serving our neighbour and not in distressing the creatures of God for our amusement’.

John Woolman, the 18th Century American Quaker, stated:

To say we love God and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature is a contradiction in itself.

As a farmer, amongst other professions he practised, John Woolman was scrupulous about his treatment of animals. During his journeys in England, he preferred to walk, refusing to use the fast stagecoaches which cruelly over-worked both men and horses. Such views were, at the time, considered outlandish and rather ridiculous – as was his enlightened thinking on the enslavement of Africans, views which were also rejected by many Quakers.

Later, in the early 19th Century, the Anglican, Thomas Clarkson noted that animals owned by Friends were well treated and that it was not permitted to abuse them.

Does a concern for our fellow sentient beings seem ‘right’ to Quakers of more modern times? As would be expected of a people whose sense of morality resides in their own experience, in all cases where Friends take a position on a subject, it is essentially a matter for the individual conscience. Fortunately, perhaps as a response to the Inner Light we seek, that conscience has been pricked over the years.

In 1847, the following appears under ‘Cruelty to Animals’ in a document from *The Tract Association of the Society of Friends*:

The proper treatment of animals highly deserves the consideration of all and every class, rich and poor, young and old. All have it in their power to be either merciful or cruel; and all will do well to remember that ‘Blessed are the merciful’...

A Minute of Bristol and Somerset Monthly Meeting on the subject of vivisection, in 1889, reads:

This Meeting, believing that mercy to the lower animals – which are to a large extent committed to our charge – is a manifest Christian duty, and that no physical good can compensate for a moral evil, would commend the subject of the legalisation of painful experiments on animals for scientific research to the prayerful consideration of the Yearly Meeting.

A response from London Yearly Meeting in the same year judiciously states:

This Meeting has given its attention to the subject thus brought before us; but, as there has not been an opportunity for fully discussing this question in all its bearings, it does not feel in a position to record a decided judgment on it. Nevertheless, deeply feeling that mercy and kindness towards the lower animals are a manifest part of our Christian duty, it is the desire of this Meeting that friends will carefully consider and make themselves acquainted with this question, in order that they may see what may be their duty with regard to it.

Let us move forward in time and see how, or if, Friends have developed their thinking on the matter. In 1959, our duty to other animals is mentioned again; we read in *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Religious Society of Friends*:

Kindness to animals should be explicitly proclaimed as a Christian duty. Suffering can be caused through callousness and carelessness based often upon ignorance, and we must testify against such cruelty wherever we find it...

We need to show a humble acknowledgment of the responsibility for animals with which God has entrusted us...

Up to this point, the injunction upon Friends has been to show mercy and kindness. By 1984, there is an important shift. In *Fresh Advices and Queries* produced by the conference, *Non-Violence – Extending the Concept to Animals*, we read:

... Do you seek to extend our witness against the use of violence to your relationship with animals and to pursue the implications of that in your daily life?

This is indeed a hopeful sign and the active pursuit of this query could make a significant difference to the way we treat our fellow creatures and would bring us into a closer relationship with like-minded followers of other faiths. But there is, unfortunately, a long way to go before this Advice is generally taken to heart by modern Friends.

The creation in 1891 of an animal welfare society which is still active today was an important step for Friends. As befits the practices of a pioneering religion such as the Religious Society of Friends, it is very likely that the Friends' Anti-Vivisection Association was the first animal welfare group established which was linked to a Christian denomination. Founded on 22nd May 1891, Joseph Storrs Fry was its first president and among its members was the Quaker Member of Parliament, Joshua Rowntree.

In 1978, the group, widening its interests to encompass all aspects of animal exploitation and was renamed 'Quaker Concern for Animals' (QCA). Today, the group regularly funds national and international animal protection organisations, attempts to quicken the Quaker conscience on animal issues, liaises with other animal welfare groups and lobbies ministers and responsible authorities both in Britain and overseas. In regular contact with other religious and spiritual groups, we pursue a committed interfaith policy, considering it important to speak with a united voice in defence of our sentient brothers and sisters. QCA has a Jain and a Jewish patron. Our Unitarian committee member, who is also the minister of Golders Green Unitarians and secretary of the World Congress of Faiths, holds an Interfaith Celebration of the Animals every year.

QCA works in practical ways to support those who work to alleviate the suffering of other animals, but, if we are to provide a different perspective from that of the myriad groups which exist worldwide, there has to be a spiritual dimension to how we approach the issue. We have to 'live the testimonies'. However, these have always been

understood to relate to our human neighbours. The testimony to peace is taken to mean peace between people, as the 1984 conference states. Yet as long ago as 1902, Frederick B Sainty, founder of the Friends' Vegetarian Society, asked the question: 'As a Society, we are opposed to war against man; and should not our testimony also be borne against the war that is constantly waged against animals?'

That war rages even more mercilessly today. The horrors of intensive farming and vivisection imply a sustained and constant attack on our defenceless fellow beings, a refusal to recognise their status as God's creatures. These beings, as vulnerable creatures, are due our protection. 'Responsibility to protect' is a current discussion theme in the Quaker peace movement, but it is only, so far, extended to the human animal.

Corder Catchpool, a Quaker peacemaker during the two world wars, sees the logic and virtue of extending Quaker inclusivity to all beings:

Albert Schweitzer sets the thought of Reverence for Life at the very centre of his philosophy. In doing so, he goes one step further than George Fox... and our central concept of the Inner Light, 'that of God' in every man; for Life includes not man only, but all living creatures.

There is a place for living the testimonies of justice and integrity in our willingness to acknowledge the silent suffering of other beings. There are good reasons for rejecting a divisive hierarchy of species. There is an argument for recognising the equality of other animals' capacity for love, joy and pain and for acting upon that recognition. There is, indeed, a good reason to live in accordance with it.

John Bright, nineteenth century parliamentarian and political reformer, said:

There is nothing meaner than barbarous and cruel treatment of the dumb creatures who cannot answer us or resent the misery which is often needlessly inflicted on them.

Number 42 of the Quaker book *Advices and Queries* states:

We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendour of God's continuing creation.

Surely an excellent Advice, but showing 'a loving consideration for all creatures' must imply recognition of their God-given capacity to experience suffering, stress, deprivation and other degrees of anguish inflicted by the human animal, and a serious intention to work towards alleviating that pain. To quote from a concern presented to a New Zealand Quaker Area Meeting, we would like to see a general acceptance among Friends that 'our every dealing with another animal is considered an act of moral significance'.

If Friends embraced the concept that other animals exist for their own ends and have an intrinsic value, irrespective of our interests and requirements, that would go a long way towards developing a more coherent and compassionate relationship with other beings. Quaker Concern for Animals is committed to promoting that perception.

Let us take inspiration from Meister Eckhart, the thirteenth century Dominican mystic, who, in the simplest and purest of words wrote:

'Apprehend God in all things,
For God is in all things.
Every single creature is full of God
And is a book about God.
Every creature is a word of God.
If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature
Even a caterpillar –
I would never have to prepare a sermon.
So full of God
Is every creature.'

Perhaps a vision of 'what life is like when God reigns' ...



About the author...

Peter Jones is currently a teacher at The Friends' School (Quakers) in Hobart, Tasmania, teaching courses in Asian Studies, Modern World History and Comparative Religion to senior students. The Comparative Religion course includes a unit on Deep Ecology as a non-religious world view. He has lived about half of his life in England, half in Australia, with a good few years scattered around different parts of the world. Peter has been a teacher for about half of his working life.

10 Some thoughts on living as a vegetarian

Peter D Jones

I GREW UP in England with a Nonconformist church background but with a mother who believed strongly in homeopathic medicine and health foods. We grew a lot of our own fruit and vegetables, including those on an allotment (now sadly a car park), my mother baked bread using wholemeal, stone ground, brown flour, we only got free range eggs, but we did eat meat and fish.

I started going on peace marches when I was fourteen and it was through this that I came across vegetarianism as well as Quakers, with the two often overlapping. As a teenager, I got no support from my peers, but I signed up as an Associate Member of the Vegetarian Society, read their magazine, and gradually ate less and less meat. It wasn't easy eating out as restaurants scratched their heads and usually came up with an omelette, though I did find 'Krank's' when I went to London, and that was certainly the reputation that seemed to go with being a vegetarian. Mostly it seemed to be associated with faddy eating and strange diets; though I did learn that it had a long history and that many great men and women had been vegetarians going back to the Ancient Greeks and Indians.

Most people I meet, seem to think that a vegetarian is someone who lives on vegetables but I understood it was not just an issue of not eating meat, as *'vegus'* and *'vegetus'* (from the Latin) are two different words.

I was also influenced by the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi through the peace movement and attracted to the Jain concept of 'Ahimsa' or respect for life, and it seemed a humane alternative to causing unnecessary pain and suffering to animals if I could live without eating them. I included fish as well after seeing a miserable fish flopping around on the wharf where a fisherman had dumped it, deciding that even if fish were cold blooded, they obviously were not happy in that condition. People asked if I missed eating meat but I said that wasn't the issue, if it was an ethical issue then you didn't think along those lines.

At university, I was given an egg at every meal in my first year in college, so I bought the chef a vegetarian cookery book and after that he made me a different dish every night to the envy of my fellow students who had always laughed at me. I also formed the Oxford Vegetarian Society, but most of the early members were Jewish. We met together for a good meal once a month and in the summer, had vegetarian punt parties on the river, where contrary to rumour, we did not just eat raw spinach.

By the 1970s, being a vegetarian was becoming more popular. After teaching at a high school for four years, the principal said my main offence in the eyes of the parents had been getting students to become vegetarians. I had formed a vegetarian club and we met in someone's house every month to cook various new dishes, although plenty of meat eaters came just for the great food!

I did however realise that it was mostly girls who became vegetarians and one of their main reasons was to not eat animals, though they seemed to think the issue was red meat vs. white meat. Iron was a major concern for the mothers of the girls when they went home and announced a change in their diet. Later as factory farming developed, this same trend seemed to continue, as boys just didn't seem to care

how they got their burgers or cheap chicken.

Two new reasons for becoming a vegetarian began to surface. One was environmental, that animals were using up a huge proportion of the planet's food resources and converting them very inefficiently, and the use of land was a related issue. In Australia, I saw the devastating effect of cattle and sheep on the fragile soil of an old continent, though I understood those who argued in favour of eating kangaroos and wallabies when they were culled, even if the 'roo was our national symbol and some countries criticised us for eating 'the national symbol', which I thought was rather irrational.

I knew the arguments were different in North America and Europe where cattle were reared differently and where they are fed such things as grain which has been described as second class protein, meat being 'first class.' Vegetarians, however, could consume grain directly and needed far less land to live off as a result. Factory farming was also more prevalent with a larger number of people wanting cheap food.

The second reason is that during the last decade, the climate change argument has also swung into play, ranging from misuse of the Earth's food resources to the contribution of methane given off by domestic animals, particularly cows and beef cattle. Some scientists have even suggested that the greatest contribution we can make to combating climate change is to become a vegetarian.

Through all these years, I have noticed a larger proportion of vegetarians amongst Quakers and the circles I move in, but there is also a tendency to become a vegetarian when young for emotional reasons and then give it up later on. In my experience, a lot of teenage girls become vegetarian because they confuse not eating meat with not putting on weight, a bit like taking up smoking for the same reason.

More recently, in Australia at least, environmentalists have changed their diet for primarily environmental reasons and quite a few have become vegans though that again doesn't seem to last very long. Green conferences have become quite acrimonious when there have been attempts to only serve vegetarian food on these grounds.

Animal Liberation has also become a popular issue that involves such a commitment amongst young people, along with opposition to wearing fur, opposing vivisection or avoiding animal products or testing when buying cosmetics.

My reasons for becoming a vegetarian had been primarily on ethical grounds. As a result I never considered giving it up but that doesn't seem to be the reason for the spread of vegetarianism today.

In my Deep Ecology class in Comparative Religion, which I teach at school, we look at the whole range of the Creation, starting with a look at the traditional view of how God's supreme creation – Adam or Man – relates to the realm of animals, birds and sea creatures, and the disastrous consequence of this view, sometimes known as 'dominionism'. This is despite the likelihood that Adam and Eve started out as vegans though after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, their son, Cain, soon deviated as a hunter!

At our local synagogue, a visiting rabbi explained that in his opinion, the Torah included the Jewish dietary laws as a half way house for Jews to become vegetarians, as God knew he couldn't expect everyone to switch over immediately.

Buddhists draw an odd distinction (to our ears) between actually killing the creature and eating it, while in faiths like Hinduism and Islam, God seems to care only about certain animals when it comes to eating them but not the others.

We take a look at factory farming and other processes that involve the killing and suffering of animals, as a logical consequence of the Genesis world view, that animals are there for our use so it doesn't matter if we 'farm' them or use them in experiments or for entertainment or wear their skins. More recently, Creation Spirituality argues that we are in fact stewards of creation and God wants us to care and protect the world s/he made for us.

Understandably, there is the middle ground, where people say they feel able to eat eggs and meat as long as it doesn't come from a factory farm, even though they know it costs more, a point at which it becomes

a class issue.

It is however for all this mixture of reasons and a growing concern amongst Friends for the environment and the wider creation, that now seems a good time to consider a testimony designed to bring together these concerns as an Advice or Query, in keeping with a worldview of what Buddhists call ‘sentient beings’ as part of the Creation. Perhaps it’s like the Query on alcohol, that we just ask Friends to consider how they relate to the animal world, but don’t expect them to all give it up overnight. In many cases, there can be thoughtful changes, without giving up meat and seafood altogether, but Friends will draw the line at different points after considering the issues involved.

I would like to think they would become vegetarians but I know that there are a myriad of other issues that form our world view, and not everyone will come at it from a philosophical and ethical position as I did. As we examine our commitment to non-violence and to the environment, it does, however, seem appropriate that we more formally ask ourselves where we stand in relation to the wider creation.

Having travelled in lands and cultures where people would starve if they gave up eating meat or fish, I am well aware of the fact that a commitment to vegetarianism might not be appropriate for all of us on this planet. However, in our advanced industrialised society we do have the option of being vegetarian though the reasons might vary, but at least we need to carefully consider what we eat and consider how it is produced, taking the welfare of the animals into account if we do eat meat.



About the author...

Sandra Kyle lives in Auckland, New Zealand, where she attended Mt Eden meeting for some years. She is a Lecturer in English (ESOL) at the Unitec Institute of Technology. She teaches piano and keyboard part-time, and has written numerous letters, articles and short stories that have been published. Sandra has travelled widely, and has lived in Australia, France, the UK and India.

She has five animals of her own, and volunteers for Bird Rescue and Save Animals from Exploitation. Sandra has recently become a vegan, after being a vegetarian for nearly forty years.

11 Hold all creatures dear

Sandra Kyle

Compassion, in which all ethics must take root, can only attain its full breadth and depth if it embraces all living creatures and does not limit itself to mankind.

Albert Schweitzer

ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T give up all flesh eating until my early twenties, I had mentally become a vegetarian as a teenager. One day, when my mother was serving a leg of lamb I suddenly put two and two together. 'You mean I have been eating dead animals all my life?', I asked incredulously, as everyone laughed. Although I continued eating meat for some years after that, I was uncomfortable about my double standards and began to prepare myself mentally for becoming a vegetarian. How could confining, torturing and slaughtering animals be right, I asked myself? Was I so attached to the taste of meat that I could keep turning my head away from the reality of what we do to animals? When I managed to give up flesh entirely I became evangelistic in my views – some may say sanctimonious – but I was discouraged at how difficult it was to persuade people to give up eating meat. Yet nearly forty years later, I am now hopeful that attitudes are slowly beginning to change and that soon a plant based

diet will become the norm.

Attitudes to animals when I was growing up were less enlightened than they are now. Seminal works such as Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, advocating that animals had rights, and detailing the horrors behind the 'face on our plate', began to make an appearance. The prevailing thought when I was studying Zoology at university was that if we anthropomorphised animals, we were making a scientific error. One text book warned against attributing such 'human' emotions as love, fear, boredom, and jealousy to them. I can remember being astounded that zoology experts could believe that animals didn't have emotions when anyone who kept pets knew they did. This may have been the first instance that made me realise that just because people wrote books, had a string of letters after their names, and occupied high positions, they weren't automatically right.

It was when I was at university that I learned to trust my own observations and insight, and not to blindly accept so called 'expert' opinions without reflection. I, and no-one else, would decide what I believed in, and who my role models were, and that's the way it has been ever since.

In the 1980s I was living in Australia and attended a course in a rural meditation retreat in New South Wales. One day we were told to do a walking meditation outdoors and our teachers warned us to be careful of the large red ants, known as 'bull ants', as they could bite. I was on the lookout for them, and sure enough, I soon saw a large red fellow picking his way over the leafy path, heading in my direction. I slowed down to get a better look at him as he walked by, but he fooled me by stopping a few centimeters away. He remained for some time like this, and when I didn't move he slowly swiveled his head upwards, and fixed his large eyes on me, feelers twitching. I was astonished! An ant was staring at me. *Why* was he staring at me? Was he frozen by fear? Why didn't he just scamper away? I wondered, as we stood there motionless, if he was as curious about me as I was about him.

Sometime later, a friend gave me a hand lens as a gift, and I used it

to inspect insects such as ladybirds, beetles and grasshoppers, to admire their beautiful features, all but invisible to the naked eye. Once a slender baby grasshopper climbed gingerly onto my finger and as I trained the lens on him he turned and looked straight up at me. Eye to compound eye again! There was something very moving about the steady gaze of this delicate creature, on this earth for such a short time. Having such experiences with beings relatively low on the evolutionary ladder made me believe, like Meister Eckhart and Saint Francis, that the correct attitude to cultivate within ourselves is a reverence for all life.

Another story comes to mind. In the 1990s I was doing some contract work at one of the largest hospitals in New Zealand. Intrigued by a trolley shrouded by a white sheet, I asked the laboratory technician pushing it where she was going. Smiling kindly, she ushered me through an unmarked door and I was in a room with dozens of cages, filled with little mice. Before I even had chance to take in why all the mice were there, she reached down to the floor, where one had escaped. ‘Whoops’ she said as she held it squirming by the tail, ‘this one’s sick’ and promptly disappeared into an adjoining room. I heard the sound of a Waste Master, and she came back without the mouse. The blood immediately rushed to my head, and my thinking became confused. Surely she hadn’t put a live mouse down the waste master? I tried to concentrate as she bustled around showing me the various tests they were doing on the mice, and I tried to be polite. But deep down I was profoundly shocked that the laboratory technician had so matter-of-factly dispatched this little creature to the pulveriser. Little did I know at the time that this was the way that poultry operations disposed of their day-old male chicks!

It must be said that I have a particular affinity with birds. I regularly feed the swamp hens (Pukekos) on the campus where I work, pigeons in the local shopping centre, ducks and geese at the nearby wildlife reserve. I volunteer at a bird rescue facility, and release rehabilitated birds back into the wild. Shortly after my key unlocks my door in the evening, one or two of my companion birds are sitting on my shoulder

as I go about my chores. My own beloved pets have taught me a lot about avian intelligence and feelings, and, having accidentally stood on my parrot's digits, I know they experience pain in much the same way that I do, and protest it a lot more loudly, what's more!

Contemporary writers like Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, Tom Regan, Jonathan Saffran Froer, Gene Baur, Peter Lovenheim write with great insight and passion into the emotional life of animals, and create a convincing case for not eating them. Animals have a sense of their own being. They don't want to be hurt, or killed. We don't have dominion over them and we don't have the right to exploit them.

I believe that the way we exploit animals for food production, research, fashion, entertainment and profit is at best a form of callous indifference, and at worst, a holocaust unimaginable in scale. As Isaac Beshevis Singer has said, 'every day is Treblinka for the animals'.

I dare say that such institutionalised cruelty (there is no other word for it) as factory farming and animal experimentation will be looked back upon by future generations with the same horror and disbelief as we now look at the Holocaust, genocide and other atrocities. *Forty-eight billion* animals are slaughtered every year for food alone, *five million* every hour. Conditions for battery hens are so horrendous that their feet sometimes begin to grow around the wire they stand on. The pain pathways of birds have been clearly mapped out, and you can be sure they are suffering physical pain – and that is not considering the mental anguish they are subjected to by force feeding, 24-hour lighting, the inability to turn around, or indulge in natural behaviours such as walking and pecking. Chickens, pigs, turkeys and calves are separated from their families at birth, and often suffer the mental and physical anguish of living in tiny spaces with no relief. And at the end of it all they have the ride to the slaughterhouse, where they are greeted by the smell of death before they themselves are concussed, electrocuted, or have their throats slashed. If it is true that we are the most intelligent of all the animals, with the highest level of awareness and emotional sentience, then *what in the name of Heaven – or rather what in Hell's*

name – are we doing?!!

Thousands of years ago, Pythagoras said that as long as people massacre animals, they will kill each other, and I hold this true. Animals are not ours to eat, wear experiment on, or callously use for entertainment or profit. When we ascribe certain qualities to animals we are not anthropomorphising them, we are merely acknowledging our common traits, forged during millennia of evolution. As Tom Regan writes in *The Case for Animal Rights* ‘they see and hear, believe and desire, remember and anticipate, plan and intend’. When we speak of animal sympathy, self-sacrifice, loyalty and courage we are not being anthropomorphic, but recognising the qualities we share with our fellow beings. All who are involved in the world’s meat and ocean-life production industry, as well as vivisectionists, furriers, those who trade in animal parts, those who use animals for monetary gain, such as greyhound racing, those who use them for entertainment, such as circuses and rodeos – as well as all of us who look the other way – are standing in the shadows of their highest selves.

I believe the most important work we have to do as we stand poised on the brink of transformative technologies, is to transform ourselves inwardly. Inner development has not kept pace with outer development. This is not the work of one day, and a starting point would be to begin to extend the circle of compassion to all other sentient beings with which we share the planet. Let us hold all living creatures dear.

As long as people will shed the blood of innocent creatures there can be no peace, no liberty, and no harmony between people. Slaughter and justice cannot dwell together.

Isaac Bashevis Singer



About the author...

AH Mann was born in KwaZulu-Natal, educated in Grahamstown and lives in Johannesburg.

12 Animal testimony

AH Mann

ENCOUNTERING ANIMALS AND other living beings has an immediate, positive impact on my spiritual life. In contemplating the natural world around me, whether in a reserve or an urban garden, a wonderful self-transcendence takes place. Freed from ego-driven thoughts and anxieties I ponder the vast, incomprehensible reality of nature and time. I am a part of something that existed long before me, exists now, and will continue to exist once I am gone. I revere you, you that are as enmeshed in this beautifully ordered system as I am.

Flowing from this experience, I am a vegetarian on moral grounds, although I don't talk about it much. Responding badly to people telling me what to do, and suspecting this to be true for others, I try not to 'proselytise' or 'convince' other people on this and other issues.

For me, knowledge of the living conditions of farmed animals certainly contributed to my decision. But knowledge alone is insufficient to change behaviour. In my case, being honest about how I felt about passing on the animal-killing and -processing to other people made the continuation of past behaviour impossible.

I like what George Fox said to William Penn when he seemed reluctant to give up his sword: 'Wear it as long as you can'. This has been the case with every one of my moral decisions. I feel a dis-ease within me, try to ignore it, eventually am honest with myself, and change my behaviour. The new behaviour then feels so *right* that there is no doubt, no going back without regret.

On this and every other issue I would rather then say: 'Listen to the quiet voice within you'. From my experience, a decision that is 'inner-self driven' will be simple, unambiguous and freeing.

About the author...

Les Mitchell is a member of Cape Eastern Regional Meeting and is originally from Liverpool. He has worked in Pathology, Community Health and Science, in the UK, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and South Africa. He gained his doctorate at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, for his dissertation on 'Discourses and the Oppression of Non-human Animals: A Critical Realist Account'.

He is the Director of the Hunterstoun Centre of Fort Hare University and a Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. Les is a keen hiker, follows premier league football and does a bit of watercolour painting. His research interests are critical realism, non-human animals, discourses, power in society, genocide, moral disengagement and alternatives to violence.

13 Reporting The War

Les Mitchell

YOU ASK YOURSELF, how it is that something can be there, can be so obvious, yet you just don't see it? Somehow this thing doesn't even penetrate your consciousness. It's as if you know but you don't know that you know.

I can't remember when I first completely understood that The War existed. I suppose there were messages being received all the time, inconvenient information adding up until eventually a cohesive image emerged. In some ways it was like those pictures to help you to understand about optical illusions. Is it a candle stick or two old ladies with big noses? It isn't there and then, without anything changing, it suddenly is there and you wonder why you couldn't see it before. In a way that is what it was like for me when I found out about The War.

A long path of denial

I can remember thirty years ago being given a leaflet on the street in Liverpool. It showed a photograph of a prisoner in some sort of restraint being held in a laboratory and being experimented upon. I remember thinking it was very sad that these things had to happen but

I knew that this was what had to be done. As a scientist I understood that this was the way of things and that some must suffer, for the greater good of all. But I also remember feeling that, in truth, the glib justification which I offered myself that day was fundamentally flawed. Deep down I knew that there was something appallingly immoral about what we were doing.

Years later, after living in Zambia and Tanzania, I was once again back around Merseyside in England and a late-night documentary film narrated by Julie Christie about our use of ‘animals’ was on TV. I didn’t want to watch it but somehow felt I had to. It lasted hours and covered all sorts of things including factory farming and vivisection. One sequence I remember vividly was of a prisoner in a combat research unit laboratory. It was the days of the cold war and military scientists wanted to know how long a soldier would be able to go on fighting in the event of being irradiated. In the sequence shown, the prisoner had been previously exposed to radiation and was clearly suffering the terribly debilitating effects of radiation sickness. She was on a tread mill and being forced to run by having painful electric shocks put through her feet. She ran and ran and ran with a look of desperation and despair on her face and, as she ran, she vomited and vomited because of the radiation sickness. I can still see the images to this day.

Another sequence showed two small prisoners strapped in seats and held in head restraints so that they could only face forward. They were side by side and hour after hour were ‘trained’ to do tasks by being given painful electric shocks when they did the ‘wrong’ thing. For a few minutes each hour the shocks ceased and there was a short rest period. When this time arrived and the shocks stopped for a while the two small bodies remained in restraints, heads rigidly facing forward. As if by a predetermined agreement and even though they could not turn to look at each other, each one reached out a hand towards her fellow. They held each other’s hands, giving each other a little bit of comfort during their brief respite from the painful ordeal they were suffering.

In that simple gesture, that moment of intimacy and solace between the two little ones, the door to a world which was not supposed to exist, reluctantly creaked open.

More years went by and due to a strange set of circumstances I found myself in Grahamstown, South Africa with a little time on my hands. I decided, finally, to really look into what we do to those with whom we are at war. As I attempted to do this, to discover more and explore deeper, the dreadfulness, the guilt, the disbelief and the sheer overwhelming scope of our violence drew me in. Make no mistake, this is a very dark place to journey; as desolate a landscape as you will find. It is a terrain which can only be comprehended in fragments for fear that a comprehensive reflection on this bleak world will crush a person psychologically and spiritually. Then followed years of research and eventually the writing of a thesis; by that time turning away would never be an option again. It is just not possible to know what we do on a daily basis, to billions of non-humans and still remain silent.

So now I report The War and I report it any way I can – in academic work, in newspapers, on the radio, at meetings, wherever and whenever an opportunity arises. Let me tell you a little of what I have discovered about our ‘War’; the slavery, the power abuse, the violence and the oppression. Forget about the Geneva Convention, in this war there are no rules of engagement, no respect for rights, the casualties are massive and they all come from one side – and its the other side that always wins.

The War

Wars are fought for many reasons, for territory, water, timber, gold, oil and so on but also to enslave and use the population which is defeated. This war began on a small scale about 10 000 years ago as our species of ape began to become more and more dominant over our fellow beings. As we killed them at an increasing rate we also started to take their young and keep them as our prisoners. The term we use for this act of theft and enslavement is *domestication*. That was, in my opinion, what

really marked the start of The War in earnest.

Things have escalated significantly since then and particularly so over the last five hundred years as *Homo sapiens* has made greater inroads into the last wild places with our insatiable appetites for land, food, water and a whole range of things to provide for something we describe as progress. Many of our fellow species are forever gone because of our greed and thoughtlessness. They evolved as our fellow travellers through hundreds of millions of years of struggle, surviving against all sorts of adversity only for their whole kind to be extinguished forever by us.

Of those who remain, many populations are staring into the abyss of annihilation. Grimly they hold on as we take more of their food and land, poison the air they breathe and the water they drink and prevent their natural migrations. We have stolen their ancestral lands, their ancient clan homes where they had lived for tens of thousands of years. No longer do we have to go out and physically kill our adversaries; for the most part they are simply, slowly and silently, ceasing to exist. We, as a species, are the incarnation of the sixth extinction.

But perhaps in many ways it is our prisoners who fare the worst. For our slaves it is a sentence of ceaseless oppression. We hold many billions in slavery, using them daily for power, transport, experimentation and entertainment; we treat their bodies as machines for the production of flesh and to produce children – who we then take away and kill. It is no exaggeration to say that our whole world has been built on the groaning backs, and with the stolen lives, of non-human animals.

Slavery

For thousands of years non-human animals have been forced to work for the benefit of humans in some form or other. From the 17th century onwards, however, large numbers of non-human animals have been put to work.¹ Hribal describes animals as part of the working class under a capitalist system and has written an account of the part played by animals in both the agricultural and industrial revolutions in Europe.

The account compares non-human animals to others who lived and still live, under similar conditions, such as human slaves, some children, home workers and sex workers.² The unspoken ‘right’ to use animals for labour and the exploitation of non-humans for various products such as milk and wool is seldom questioned seriously and non-human animals are often portrayed as being willing partners in these processes.

Non-humans of various kinds – horses, oxen, dogs, mules, donkeys, ponies, camels, elephants and many others – have lost their freedom and given their lives to endless grinding work; pulling loads, powering all kinds of machinery, dragging barges, ploughing, carrying things on their backs and working in the mines until finally they became worn out and were discarded. At one time in Liverpool alone 20 000 horses worked on the streets. Hribal gives the following example of non-humans toiling in the industrial revolution;

Spinning frames and carding devices could now be powered via a trotting horse. So whether in Paul and Wyatt’s Birmingham operations, Richard Arkwright’s Nottingham mill, or in John Lee’s Manchester factory, these equine laborers lived on-site, and spent their days and nights ‘treading the wheel’. Work normally began at 7.00 a.m. during the winter and at 6.00 a.m. in the summer with the average shifts lasting 12 hours. Night shifts were not uncommon.³

We still use non-humans today for many of these things as well as other uses such as vivisection but the greatest number of all we use as machines to produce commodities from their bodies – milk, skin, fat, flesh, bones, wool, and so on. Our society is awash with the bodily products of the living and the remnants of the dead. Steven Wise describes how

... the blood of a slaughtered cow is used to manufacture plywood adhesives, fertiliser, fire extinguisher foam, and dyes. Her fat helps make plastic, tires, crayons, cosmetics, lubricants, soap, detergents, cough

syrup, contraceptive jellies, creams, ink, shaving cream, fabric softeners, synthetic rubber, jet engine lubricants, textiles, corrosion inhibitors, and metal-machine lubricants. Her collagen is found in pie crusts, yogurts, matches, bank notes, paper, and cardboard glue. Her intestines are used for strings for musical instruments and racquets. Her bones are in charcoal ash for refining sugar, in ceramics, and in cleaning and polishing products.⁴

Today many non humans do not even feel the grass under their feet, living in concrete floored milking parlours or being held in stalls for the whole of their short lives which may span just a couple of days or up to a few months. Others are corralled in massive feedlots, no trees to shelter under, just standing in the burning sun or sweeping rain, in the dust or the mud they are forced to simply exist, until the day comes when they are taken away to die.

Looking at those of our land based detainees who we use for food, we kill fifty-five thousand million (55 000 000 000) of them every single year.⁵ This is over 150 million individuals every twenty-four hours. Every one of them a child of parents, an individual, alive in this world for her own purposes who can experience pleasure and pain, fear and freedom and, if given the chance, the closeness of her family. This death toll is the equivalent of killing every person in South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Botswana, Angola and Uganda every single day of the year.⁶ There will be another 150 million fatalities again tomorrow but you won't read about it in any newspapers or hear about it on the TV. No atrocity will be mentioned, no tragedy referred to; no problem at all, just business as usual. This is a silent war, waged with our complicity and our consent, pursued for our profit and our pleasures.

Who is a slave?

It might be argued that slavery only describes the ownership of one person by another but Midgley points out that the Latin word *persona* never applied to slaves.⁷ In ancient Greece, slaves were classed as

non-persons as Aristotle makes clear when he notes '[t]he slave is a living tool and the tool is a lifeless slave'.⁸ Similarly, during the time of slavery in pre-civil war America, slaves were not recognised as legal persons.⁹

The defining characteristic of slavery is the ownership of one being by another. It is first and foremost a relationship of absolute power and as such open to the most corrosive abuse. Lovejoy maintains that slavery in general is a specific form of exploitation and his description captures the powerlessness of slaves:

First, slaves were property... Slaves were completely at the disposal of their masters: The[sic] labor power of slaves could be used however desired; even their sexuality and, by extension their reproductive capacities were not theirs by right.¹⁰

Concerning slavery and the Mangbetu people of north eastern Congo, Hutereau writes;

Slaves... are the absolute property of the master. He beats them, sells them, trades them, mutilates them, executes them ... Slaves have no right to legal protection.¹¹

The ownership of the slave does not only extend to the individual who has been enslaved but to their unborn children as well. As Meillassoux observes of female slaves who have born children:

As a rule their children belonged to her master even when he was not the genitor. The male slave with whom she had these children was not the 'father' and had, as a result, little or no interest in them.¹²

In the case of the Songhat-Zarma people of Mali and Niger, drawing a parallel with animals, de Sardan writes:

The child of two slaves belonged to the master of the woman, just as the increase of a herd belonged to the owner of the cow.¹³

Surely there can be no doubt that non-humans are our slaves. Non-humans are absolutely owned; they are held captive and coerced and have no agency except that allowed by their owners. They are mutilated in various ways, castrated, branded, toes clipped, beaks burnt; their babies are taken from them, their families are broken up and they are bought, sold and made pregnant at the will of others. Under the law they are property and have no rights whatsoever; they cannot be represented in court and they are utterly powerless to resist what we do to them.

Each of us is born into a world where non-human slavery already exists and has existed for many thousands of years, so it is hardly surprising that we accept the way we treat non-humans as being something normal and natural. However the striking correspondence between our oppression of humans in slavery and our oppression of non-humans today cannot simply be dismissed because we find it inconvenient and unpleasant.

Alibis, explanations and self delusion

So how can we live with all this killing? How can we justify what we do? How does this war, slavery and oppression go on? For even if we do not physically carry out any of these acts ourselves, we support them with the goods we buy, the organisations we sustain and our silence. The answer to this question is complex but two aspects, I think, are crucially important. First we carefully hide what we do from the majority of the population. For example we no longer poleaxe and dismember our captives in city streets (the shambles) nor do we allow people to watch as we put chemicals into the eyes of rabbits. These things might offend our sensitivities and they are done in large anonymous industrial killing plants and in laboratories deep inside establishments. The second thing we do is to construct a social reality where treating non-humans in the way we do is entirely acceptable, normal and justifiable. We do this in a number of ways but particularly through the language we use.

Creating reality in language

It may seem strange to suggest that we construct our social reality through language but the words we use and the way we use them carry a great deal of hidden meaning. Language is not just a simple vehicle for transmitting basic information from one person to another but carries ideology deeply imbedded within it. Is the young woman standing on the corner at night a whore, a sex worker or a child of God? Each description tells us a little something about how the user of the language sees that woman, about their moral outlook, about how they understand the world to be; in other words about their ideological view.

As we use language in a particular context we create and reinforce our ideology of the world. Language in action in this way may be described as a discourse and we can have discourses of capitalism and socialism but also a discourse of liberation, a farming discourse or a football discourse. Discourses compete with each other but if one becomes particularly dominant, it marginalises any alternatives. This then becomes the taken for granted way the world is believed to be; it becomes common sense and as such is seldom, if ever, questioned.

Discourses and their construction of reality can be very important and have far reaching consequences. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was convened to look into the atrocities committed under Apartheid makes the following observation;

It is common place to treat language as mere words, not deeds, therefore language is taken to play a minimal role in understanding violence. The Commission wishes to take a different view here. Language, discourse and rhetoric does things: it constructs social categories, it gives orders, it persuades us, it justifies, it explains, gives reasons, excuses. It constructs reality. It moves certain people against other people.¹⁴

Later the Commission links the discourses to the ideologies which they construct and reinforce.

In the South African context it is important to understand how multiple discourses combined, intersected and intertwined to create climates of violence. In this respect the ideologies of racism, patriarchy, religions, capitalism, apartheid and militarism all intertwined to ‘manufacture’ people capable of violence. Ideologies in these sorts of combinations provide the means and grounds for people to act violently and yet, ironically, believe they are acting in terms of worthy, noble and morally righteous principles.¹⁵

It is not very long ago that it was taken for granted that women are incapable of carrying out scientific research or indeed understanding science at all. Women had other roles in life which they were meant to perform such as entertaining, cooking and raising children. This was simply understood to be the natural way of the world; it was obvious and common sense. Ridiculous though that may seem today it was an ideology which affected and continues to affect the lives and aspirations of many millions of young women.

Similarly, some races were once viewed as obviously superior to others. So much was clear, a plain truth to all those concerned (at least to members of the ‘superior races’). The explanation was that superior races were those designated by God as inherently being superior or alternatively, drawing on social Darwinism, they were ‘more evolved’ than the ‘lower races’. This gave them the justification to dominate and use those lower races.

We live in a highly scientific world but there are many who still see human beings as the pinnacle of creation, the most advanced creature on the earth. It is not uncommon to read about humans being referred to as the *most highly evolved species on the planet* yet all organisms alive today have been evolving for the same length of time. So how, we may ask, can one particular species of naked ape be said to be more evolved than any other living being? Unfortunately this ideology is subtle and deeply entrenched. Even in scientific literature there are references to such things as *lower animals* and *lower vertebrates*. In fact

we speak of *humans and animals* as if these are two separate groups even though we know that humans *are* animals. We would not speak of women and humans or French people and Europeans but when it comes to animals, we use linguistic deception to dissociate ourselves from our fellow animal beings. Indeed the very term ‘animal’ carries with it connotations of a lower nature, disgust, lustfulness, barbarity and violence.

In the Holocaust there was an existing discourse of anti-Semitism but this was combined with a relatively new discourse from the ‘science’ of eugenics. Eugenics, according to Charles B Davenport, one of its leading figures, is ‘the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding’.¹⁶ The idea that the human race could be ‘improved’ by ‘better’ breeding was supported by many well-placed adherents in Germany, the United States and elsewhere and was a discourse transplanted, almost without alteration, from farming. Patterson describes how, by the end of the nineteenth century, American and German scientists had accepted a rigid theory of inheritance which generally left aside social influences on people and ranked human groups in a hierarchy with the allegedly inferior ones being ‘immoral, depraved, criminal, or simply sufficiently different to be threatening’.¹⁷ Eventually both the United States and Germany introduced compulsory sterilization and, in 1932, the Third International Conference of Eugenics was held in New York with its theme ‘A Decade of Progress in Eugenics’.¹⁸ This ‘science’ maintained that ‘defective’ people in society, which meant the disabled, the mentally ill, criminals, homosexuals and the ‘feeble minded’, posed a threat to the purity and future strength of the stock. There was a continual fear of contamination of good stock by bad and of the weakening of the stock by the introduction of ‘bad blood.’ Patterson further records that, following the First World War, the doctrine of racial hygiene took hold in German medicine and science. This meant that institutionalised patients could be described as having ‘lives without purpose’ and as ‘human ballast’, ‘semi-humans’, ‘defective humanity’, ‘mentally dead’, ‘empty shells of human beings’

and those who were ‘unworthy of life’.¹⁹ The ground was prepared for not only the sterilization but the killing of undesirable elements. The United States, Germany, Denmark and other Scandinavian countries all enacted legislation to allow compulsory sterilization.²⁰

Lack of moral concern during the Holocaust, Glass maintains, was in part because of the climate created by German science, portraying killing Jewish people as simply part of a health policy.²¹ Jews were portrayed as vermin:

Science had established its dominance over the belief structure of Nazi Germany. Race lay at the centre of this scientific edifice; and racial hatred elaborated itself as a set of scientific principles obsessed with blood cleanliness, genetic purity, and a phobic reactivity to the potential of race contamination. These beliefs exercised an enormous influence over scientific, professional, political, and administrative practices.²²

Proctor claims that:

... science set the stage for the Final Solution long before the arrival of National Socialism. When the Nazis took over, the pre-existing scientific discourse allowed the doctors to become the priests of the cult of the German blood as well as its medical keepers and the exterminators of its potential polluters.²³

Power

It is the powerful who get to name the world and so inculcate their ideology until it becomes so every day and common place we fail to recognise it as ideology at all and it goes unchallenged. This as Bourdieu points out, leads to the ‘... recognition of legitimacy through the misrecognition of arbitrariness’.²⁴

Non-human animals have no power over humans in a physical sense and obviously no power in a social sense. So the social construction of their identity, their identity in the human world, depends upon human discourses. While in popular imagery they may be interesting,

cuddly, and cute and so on, we ruthlessly use non-humans for our own purposes and have constructed discourses which give us permission to do just that.

Our language use highlights this. We often use negative and degrading non-human descriptions. He is an animal, it was a brutal attack, dumb animal, dirty pig, greedy pig, a bitch, a donkey, an old cow, a dirty rat, behaving like a pig and in such ways we portray non-humans as disgusting, stupid, worthless, violent and gluttonous.

Some descriptions ascribe an implicit use for non-humans as if this is the purpose of individual being's life. Examples of this are; food animals, broiler chickens, layers, roasters, red beef cattle, laboratory animals, dual purpose breeds, beef calves, breeding cattle and slaughter lambs. Each description reinforces the erroneous idea that this is the true purpose of this sentient beings existence while it is, in reality, a purpose, a use, imposed on her by her oppressors.

Non-humans are never murdered but culled, processed or harvested. We eat meat or steak or silverside but not flesh, we have on the table a leg of lamb but not a lamb's leg, and we do not drink mother's milk (meant for her dead baby) even though that is the true nature of the liquid in the carton. The world we construct has non-humans existing, not as individuals but en masse, as things which are replaceable by another batch of things when we have used up this lot. To truly think of them as individuals would be too much to bear for we might then begin to examine what we are really doing.

As a reporter of *The War* I have, perhaps, exceeded my brief and meandered off to take a glimpse into other territory but every good correspondent should surely have something to say in explaining the events they report.

This is a short and in many ways incomplete essay and I do not ask you, kind reader who has come this far, to believe a single word of it. The evidence for *The War* is all around us, as the mounds of body parts in any supermarket readily testify. So I leave you to your own thoughts and investigations. But let me finish with a famous reporter

of The War . His words are unambiguous and he has the courage to speak them.

Leonardo da Vinci, 600 years ago, expressed his pity for animals saying, ‘From countless numbers will be taken away their little children and the throats of these shall be cut, and they shall be quartered most barbarously’.²⁵ He also wrote, concerning the oppression and slavery of non-humans:

O asses which are beaten, O indifferent nature, wherefore art thou so partial, being to some of thy children a tender and benignant mother, and to others a most cruel and pitiless stepmother? I see thy children given into slavery to others without any sort of advantage, and instead of remuneration for the services they have done, they are repaid by the severest suffering, and they spend their whole life in benefiting their oppressor.²⁶

At the interface between humans and non-humans the innocent and truly powerless are delivered into the hands of total power. These are our hands, yours and mine. Can there be any greater test of our spiritual, moral and ethical resolve than this? Will we accept the challenge placed before us or will we continue to look the other way?

This has been your correspondent reporting the ongoing genocide in the fields, and supermarkets near you...



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Since entering the teaching field in 1994, he has taught English and Spanish at many levels, ranging from elementary, junior high, and high school to junior college and the university. He has taught in five states in the US and abroad in England, Portugal, and Spain. He has always had a great love for animals and maintains a vegetarian diet. He is a Buddhist Quaker and is currently attends a Universalist Unitarian Church with his family.

14 *A sentient being in the Light*

Benjamin Schmeiser

*How both human and non-human animals are referred to
in Quakerism and Buddhism*

IN RECENT YEARS, a growing body of research^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5} has analyzed in semantic terms how humans describe their relationship to animals in English, which has typically maintained separate vocabulary to distinguish human animals from their non-human counterparts (e.g. ‘to murder’ vs. ‘to slaughter’).

Other researchers^{6, 7} have focused on how humans describe their relationship to animals in a religious context. It is curious to note that many Eastern religions, such as Buddhism, group both human and non-human animals together in the term ‘sentient beings’, whereas many Western religions, such as Christianity, have traditionally made a distinction between humans and their non-human counterparts. However, a current topic of interest to Quakers is the status of the term ‘sentient being’ in the testimonies.

This chapter considers the semantics of the term ‘sentient being’ in Buddhism and Quakerism in specific detail and analyses its use in Quaker testimonies. The rest of the chapter is organised as follows: The first section considers in greater detail the semantics of the distinction between human and non-human animals, the next section

offers a comparison of Buddhism and Quakerism, with emphasis on the testimonies and precepts, the third section treats how these two religions view animals, and the essay concludes with new and emerging testimonies, and proposes a lexical (i.e. word) change.

The issue

This section discusses what Negro⁸ refers to as the ‘semantic architecture of the domain of existence’. Humans describe their relationship to animals in a variety of ways in semantic terms. A striking characteristic of English¹ is its distinction between humans and non-humans for the verb ‘to kill’. If an animal is killed for the purposes of human consumption, it is ‘slaughtered’ or ‘butchered’, not ‘killed’; if an animal is injured in an accident, it is ‘destroyed’⁹. Stibbe² notes that if you do use a verb such as ‘to slaughter’ for humans, it changes the meaning to include a more brutal (i.e. animal-like) meaning, as in the example, taken from Stibbe¹⁰, ‘the refugees were slaughtered.’ In this example, the use of the verb ‘to slaughter’ suggests that they were killed ‘brutally, uncaringly, and immorally’¹⁰.

Stibbe goes on to note that it is not simply a matter of distinction, but also one of marking human superiority in that ‘animals are represented in language not only as different but also as inferior, the two conditions necessary for oppression’¹⁰. The use of metaphors and idioms in English that involve references to animals are almost invariably negative. Idioms such as ‘sick as a dog’, ‘flogging a dead horse’, ‘working like a dog’ and ‘the straw that broke the camel’s back’ invoke negative connotations of animals; quite curiously, he notes that the only *positive* idioms refer to wild birds and insects, as in ‘an early bird’, ‘wise as an owl’, ‘as fit as a flea’ and ‘being as free as a bird’¹⁰. Stibbe rightfully points out that the human vs. non-human distinction is not solely bound to semantics, but also is evidenced at the syntactic level of the language. For example, when animals die, count nouns may convert to mass nouns as ‘some chicken’, ‘some chicken leg’ or ‘some lamb’; this usage with the word ‘some’ would be ungrammatical

with the word ‘human’¹¹.

He also suggests that animals ‘on safari’ become mass nouns when the people viewing them either have a camera or a gun, as in ‘we say giraffe, elephant, and lion’¹¹. Although it is perhaps bound to my own dialect, I would add that any animal hunted can be referred to using a mass noun, as in ‘yesterday we hunted duck, rabbit, and bear’. Notice that this does not apply to hunting other things, as in ‘yesterday we hunted for mushrooms’; if mushrooms were converted to a mass noun, the sentence would be ungrammatical. Finally, he treats pronoun distinctions in the form of ‘us’ when we refer to humans and ‘them’ for non-humans, along with ‘he’ and ‘she’ for humans and ‘it’ for non-humans¹¹.

Serpell’s³ study considers the attitude humans have toward non-humans in terms of two categories: ‘affect’ and ‘utility’. Serpell defines ‘affect’ as ‘representing people’s affective and/or emotional responses to animals’ defines ‘utility’ as ‘representing people’s perceptions of animals’ instrumental value’¹². His study suggests that our views of animal (and animal welfare) are formed by how much we feel affection or by how useful it is to our needs. For Serpell, positive affection encompasses certain moral obligations, but strong utility considerations may override these obligations¹². His findings suggest that, though negative affect is compatible with negative utility (and can be compatible with positive utility), positive affect is potentially incompatible with both positive and negative utilities¹². That is, negative utility (i.e. low need) and negative affect are compatible and even positive utility (i.e. high need) and negative affect can be compatible in that we can appreciate what they do for us, even if we do not like them. However, positive affect is not compatible with either positive or negative utility. This suggests, as Serpell³ states:

Animals with either strongly negative or positive utility value often seem to be precluded from becoming the object of people’s positive affections, presumably because such animals are usually harmed as a result of their utility.¹²

Crucially, for Serpell this struggle between positive affect and (positive or negative) utility ‘helps to account for many of the tensions and paradoxes that arise from our relationships with animals’¹³.

Milstein⁴ considers different categories of discourse, including that of the meat industry. She discusses how the meat industry works to alleviate the aforementioned tensions we have in our relationships with animals mentioned by Serpell³. Milstein notes the use of ‘speaking’ animals in advertisements; the very non-human animal that is to be eaten is usually seen smiling, speaking to us, and prompting us to eat him/her. Though it is an obvious tool to diminish and hide animal suffering, it has nonetheless proven to be a powerful one. It is this very ‘incompatibility’ that I find rather strange. One might imagine that by promoting a more positive affection for the non-human animal, humans would have more compassion for his/her welfare, yet the public generally seems to accept this decoy. Milstein goes on to treat ‘mastery discourse’, which is discourse that suggests that non-human animals are inferior to human animals. An important point to consider is that mastery discourse relegates people to ‘hierarchical roles and indifference to animals’ and, perhaps even more importantly, it denies ‘human-animal relationships’¹⁴.

Mitchell’s⁵ dissertation treats the use of non-human animals in the farm industry. With regard to language, Mitchell adds to the previous body of work by mentioning the distinction between humans and non-humans with regard to their young, namely that humans refer to their young as ‘babies’ yet we have separate words for the young of animals, for example, a baby pig is a ‘piglet’ and a baby sheep is a ‘lamb’¹⁵. With regard to kinship terms, Mitchell offers further distinction in that female parents are called ‘mothers’ for humans, yet are called ‘cows’, ‘does’, ‘dams’, ‘hens’, ‘ewes’, and ‘sows’; male parents are called ‘bulls’, ‘boars’, ‘cockerels’ and ‘rams’; and finally, their offspring are called ‘calves’, ‘lambs’, ‘chicks’, ‘poults’, ‘heifers’, ‘day-olds’, and ‘weaners’¹⁶. Finally, Negro¹ also noted the distinction between ‘to reproduce’, which is designated for humans and ‘to mate’, which is

designated for non-humans.

In terms of the remains of the dead, Mitchell observes the distinction between ‘corpse’ or ‘the deceased’ for humans and ‘meat’, ‘beef’, ‘pork’, ‘veal, and ‘mutton’¹⁶. He also notes the word ‘food’ is designated for humans, whereas it changes to ‘feed’ (e.g. expensive feed) for non-humans, at least in the farm industry¹⁵.

In conclusion, this section has considered recent studies that have furthered our understanding of the semantic categories that exist distinguish humans from their non-human counterparts. Milstein offers the importance of deconstructing language at the semantic level with regard to our non-human counterparts by stating:

Scholars, therefore, argue that a crucial step to changing the human relationship with animals is in the act of deconstructing the use of language and associated communicative practices. One who wants to change human relations with animals must maintain a state of heightened discursive awareness and exercise a critical and self-reflexive sensibility.¹⁷

In what follows, I consider how two different religions, Buddhism and Quakerism, which have many similarities, have chosen to denominate both human and non-human animals. I then discuss the denominations as they currently stand in Quakerism in greater detail and suggest how Quakerism can ‘maintain a state of heightened discursive awareness’¹⁷.

The Buddhist-Quaker connection¹⁸

I have practiced Theravadan Buddhism for the last eight years, focusing on Vipassana meditation. One of the meditation groups I attend meets at a Quaker Meeting House and I happened to pick up a brochure one day on liberal, unprogrammed Quakerism. Over the last five years, I have studied Quakerism and have noticed many similarities with Theravadan Buddhism. At first blush, they appear to be quite different religions. One is an Eastern religion, which dates back approximately 2500 years ago; the other a Western religion, which dates back

approximately 360 years. Theravadan Buddhism is the oldest of the three main branches of Buddhism, with the word ‘Theravada’ meaning ‘The Greater Vehicle’. Theravadan Buddhist nations include India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. As I explored liberal, unprogrammed Quakerism in greater detail, I found many similarities and points that I identified with in both religions.

For the current discussion, I limit myself to one main point of similarity, however, I direct the reader to the list in Appendix 1 that I compiled on my own spiritual journey. Though both religions lack strict dogma or creeds, they do have a moral code, or ‘precepts’, as in the case of Buddhism, or ‘testimonies’ to their beliefs in everyday life, as in the case of Quakerism. The following table contains the list for each religion:

Table 1. The Buddhist Precepts and Quaker Testimonies^{19,20}

<i>The Buddhist Precepts</i>	<i>The Quaker Testimonies</i>
1. Refrain from destroying living creatures	1. Truth and Integrity
2. Refrain from taking that which is not given	2. Equality and Community
3. Refrain from sexual misconduct	3. Simplicity
4. Refrain from incorrect speech	4. Peace
5. Refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs ... which lead to carelessness	(5.) The Earth and the Environment

It should be noted that there is variation in both the wording of the lists and, in the case of the Quaker testimonies, the number of them; that is, each meeting has its own testimonies and some do not contain

the fifth one listed above. In the current study, the Buddhist precepts were taken from Bullitt¹⁹ and the testimonies were taken from The Friends Meeting of Austin, Texas²⁰ as a list of ‘some of the best known testimonies’.

In these precepts and testimonies, I would like to call attention to the first precept which is to refrain from destroying living creatures, and Testimony 4, the Peace Testimony. One striking similarity between the two religions is the importance they give to the inherent worthiness of an individual. Buddhism proposes that all sentient beings have a Buddha nature, which is the inherent ‘Buddhahood’ of every sentient being; that is, the ability of all sentient beings to attain enlightenment. The Quakers believe in an ‘Inner Light’ of all humans and that there is ‘that of God’ in all humans. A second striking similarity is the importance the two religions place on peace or non-violence. For these two religions, whether you have ‘Buddha nature’ or you have an ‘Inner Light’, you have inherent worth, and as such, you should not be harmed (Precept 1, Peace Testimony). Both religions allow for a wide range of beliefs among their members, but it would be hard to be a Buddhist if you did not believe in the Buddha nature of all living creatures and it would be hard to be a Quaker if you did not believe that there is ‘that of God’ in all humans. It bears mentioning that there is considerable debate regarding the first precept and what constitutes intent to destroy a living creature. For further discussion, especially as it pertains to eating meat, see Chánh Kiên²¹. There is also debate in terms of the Peace Testimony, especially as it pertains to military service. For further discussion, see Smith²² and Gallery²³. For an essay on non-violence that compares the two religions, see King²⁴.

In conclusion, both Buddhism and Quakerism highlight the inherent worth of every human. That said, Buddhism refers not only to humans, but to all living creatures (or ‘sentient beings’) in its precepts, whereas Quakerism confines inherent worth solely to humans. In what follows,

I discuss Buddhist and Quaker views on non-human animals.

Buddhist and Quaker reference to non-human animals

Buddhism is generally regarded as viewing non-human animals in a favorable light²⁵. In the Dhammapada, which is a sacred text that contains sayings of the Buddha, Dhammapada 129 states that,

All living things fear being beaten by clubs.

All living things fear being put to death.

Putting oneself in the place of the other,

Let no one kill nor cause another to kill.

In understanding Buddhism's relation and reference to non-human animals, we must take into consideration four main points. Firstly, as previously mentioned, in Buddhism all sentient beings have a Buddha nature and thus may attain Enlightenment. Secondly, all things in the universe are interdependent and together, they comprise the whole; we are not separate or distinct from anything, as we are all part of the universe. Thirdly, Buddhists believe in rebirth, in which you may be born as something else in your next lifetime. Fourthly, in your new lifetime you inherit the karmic energy accumulated in your previous life. These four concepts work in sync with the first precept of not destroying living beings in that we should not harm/destroy living beings because firstly, all living beings have 'Buddha Nature'; secondly, we all comprise the whole, and thus, to hurt another being is to hurt oneself; thirdly, the concept of rebirth changes the perspective because each living being carries with it an accumulation of many previous lives in different forms; and fourthly you create your own positive and negative karma and when you intentionally harm or destroy other living beings, you create negative karma. Buddhists generally go out of their way to avoid harming sentient beings, though there are different points of view regarding eating meat. Kemmerer²⁶ adds that,

Core elements of Buddhist philosophy support animal advocacy and call for change in our contemporary treatment of non-human animals. Buddhism does not assume a strict boundary between humans and animals. In fact, Buddhism presents species as a semi-permeable membrane, at least in part due to the philosophy of reincarnation. Eons of transmigration have had a predictable result: today's duck and dog are yesterday's human sisters and brothers.²⁷

In short, branches of Buddhism generally do not distinguish between human and non-human animals as it refers to all sentient beings. That said, Buddhists do evidence a wide range of opinion regarding what constitutes a sentient being. When translated from Sanskrit or Pāli into English, we observe a variety of terms used, such as 'sentient beings', 'living creatures', 'living things', and 'living beings'. I use the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary's definition of 'sentient' as 'responsive to or conscious or sense impressions'²⁸. Some Buddhists view the term 'living things' as including all forms of life including plants, whereas others view the term 'sentient beings' as only those that can feel pain and thus suffer. In summary, though Buddhists might differ on minute semantic detail, we can say that in Buddhism, there is often no distinction made between human and non-human animals.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) are a Protestant denomination of Christianity. It is generally the case that in liberal, unprogrammed meetings, many see the Bible as a sacred text written by humans who were inspired by God, but not as a sacred text that *is* the Word of God. That said, I will briefly discuss how Christianity makes reference to non-human animals, before I consider specifically how the Quakers do.

Unlike Buddhism, Christianity seems to suggest human dominion over their non-human counterparts. Additionally, it is often viewed in a negative light in terms of its treatment of animals²⁹. Stibbe² notes, 'Oppression of animals is often justified quite literally as "God given" through the much-quoted verse from Genesis (1:28) where God gives humans "dominion" over animals'³⁰. Genesis (1:28), taken from the

King James version, reads:

And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the Earth.³¹

Preece and Fraser⁶ suggest that viewing Genesis (1:28) without considering the ‘traditional understanding of biblical passages’ is too simplistic; they suggest the problem is much more complex and its interpretation is context-dependent³². They consider the semantic notions of the word ‘dominion’, with the first interpretation as ‘a kind of despotic domination such as the subjugation of one people by its enemies’³³; the second, that humans were created in God’s image and thus were expected to act with ‘his moral nature’ toward to other creatures³⁴. This second interpretation, they argue, is the more commonly-accepted one historically. Continuing their well-written, context-driven study of non-human animals in the Bible, Preece and Fraser⁶ go on to remind us that interpretations should be viewed in the Bible’s pastoral context. For this reason, they argue, many Biblical passages pertain to domesticated animals; those that include wild animals are not generally positive³⁵.

By the sixteenth-century, Huff³⁶ submits that the Christian view toward non-human animals was favourable, stating:

The Western intellectual tradition by the sixteenth-century Reformers treated the diversity of life on earth as a standard category of the Christian theological enterprise, often speaking of non-human creatures as components in a ‘second book’ of divine revelation.³⁷

It is with this pretext that I turn specifically to Quakerism and its view of non-human animals. The Quakers have always been at the forefront in terms of Christianity and animal welfare; they were the earliest denomination to oppose hunting as a sport and were among the pioneer vegetarians of the nineteenth-century³⁸. They have remained very active in, and dedicated to, animal welfare. There are many

Quaker-based animal welfare groups and often times meals offered at social gatherings are vegetarian. It is curious, then, that much of the terminology regarding (human and non-human) animals has essentially remained unaltered in the testimonies; that is, the distinction between humans and non-human animals continues.

Bennett's³⁹ dissertation considers the relationship between testimony and the emergence of the mind. In his analysis, his research proposes that humans can 'understand' because they are able to see connections between propositions; animals can 'understand' that they are about to be killed, but they are not able to 'entertain propositions'⁴⁰. He goes on to write:

The concept of 'understanding', however, is a human concept, and as such its application to non-human beings is derivative, it is derived from the way the term is applied to the epistemic status of human beings.⁴⁰

This point is a very important one as it seems that whereas Buddhism generally groups living beings in terms of their ability to *feel* (i.e. sentient beings), Quakerism and Christianity in general group living beings in terms of their ability to *perceive*.

Another possibility to consider, however, is that it could also be based on the notion of the soul. In Christianity, only humans have souls and therefore it is possible that semantics in Christian texts distinguishes human animals from their non-human counterparts only in terms of the soul. In fact, some Christians even deny that humans are animals, citing Creationism as their basis. In turn, Buddhism does not have a concept of the soul; in the Buddhist notion of rebirth, the karmic energy of the sentient being passes to another, but there is no soul.

Though undoubtedly a point of interest, I am not so much concerned with *why* Christian denominations such as Quakerism make a semantic distinction between living beings, but rather with the mere fact that the semantic distinction exists: Buddhism generally uses 'sentient beings' (or a similar expression) to denominate all living beings that can feel

and perceive pain (and thus suffering), Quakerism uses ‘humans’ and ‘animals’. In the following section, I conclude by looking at new and emerging testimonies from Quaker meetings and I propose a semantic change from possibly cognitive distinctions or those made based on the soul, to those made purely based on the senses.

Conclusions

As I consider new and emerging testimonies, I refer you back to Table 1 (see page 136). Take note that the fifth testimony is in parentheses. Though the first four testimonies are generally present in all Quaker meetings, the fifth is an emerging testimony, and seems to be well-established, at least for the meeting notes I read online. It is generally the case, at least for liberal, unprogrammed Quaker meetings to include a fifth testimony that makes reference to caring for the Earth. As in animal welfare, I would submit that Quakers are at the vanguard of Christian concern for the environment. As this new(er) testimony shapes our spiritual practice and our daily dedication to the Earth, I submit that it is at this time we should also re-evaluate the distinction between human and non-human animals. That is, as Quaker meetings (re-)word their testimonies, especially the one regarding the environment, I suggest abandoning what Stibbe² refers to as the ‘us vs. them’ (i.e. humans vs. animals/non-human animals) distinction, in lieu of ‘sentient beings’. Mitchell³ is correct when he states that:

If discourses which recognise non-humans as sentient beings, having such things as individuality, families, interests, and inherent worth, were ubiquitous, most people would find any involvement whatsoever in the non-human animal farming industry utterly repugnant.⁴¹

By referring to both ourselves and our non-human counterparts as ‘sentient beings’, we use egalitarian speech and do away with words that suggest human dominion. In short, a focus on the language that we use will shape how we view animals in the future. As Milstein⁴ states,

...one must refuse to take communication about animals at face value and must instead always question the status quo, or the preferred discursive ‘common sense’ that circulates in communication about animals. A focus on discourse not only raises awareness about the discursive nature of human relationships with animals, but also allows one to begin to question the status quo of such relationships.¹⁷

May all sentient beings be in the Light.



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Appendix 1 - Similarities between (Liberal) Quakerism and (Theravadan) Buddhism (adapted from blog: Benjamin Schmeiser; March 28, 2009)

1. *Lack of dogma*: The Quakers have ‘testimonies’ and the Buddhists have the Noble Eightfold Path. Both religions share lack of dogma.
2. *Work ethic (manual labor)*: Both religions put tremendous emphasis on manual labor and the importance of a strong work ethic.
3. *The written word*: Generally speaking, advancement in personal spirituality is viewed optimally through personal experience and not through reading canonical religious texts, or theologies. Both place importance on personal letters, diaries, journals, reflections of fellow Quakers or Buddhists.
4. *Equality*: Whether you view each and every person as having ‘that of God’ in them or as having ‘Buddha Nature’, they both place importance on equality. Buddhism considers all ‘sentient beings’ to have a ‘Buddha Nature’.
5. *Simplicity*: Both religions place a strong emphasis on leading a simple, frugal life. This includes living within your financial means, unassuming clothes, lack of personal beautification products, such as perfumes or make-up.
6. *Personal revelation*: Liberal Quaker Meetings are ‘unprogrammed’ and do not have a ‘leader’ (e.g. minister) who reveals the Truth to you; Theravadan Buddhism does not have a spiritual leader. That is, no one has ‘a more direct connection’ to revelation to the Truth (or ‘dhamma’) than you or anyone else.
7. *Peace/Non-violence*: Both religions place non-violence as a core ‘value’ or ‘testimony’. Both religions are very accepting of differing beliefs, but it would be quite difficult to be either a Buddhist or Quaker and not place peace and non-violence in high regard.
8. *Openness*: Given no creeds or dogma, both religions are very open to people of different faiths and accepting of differing opinions.
9. *Stories*: Morals, lessons, and spiritual reflections are frequently done through stories or anecdotes, as opposed to a ‘sermon’.
10. *The truth*: Both religions focus on telling the truth. In fact, Quakers do not take oaths because that would someone suggest you do not normally tell the truth under certain circumstances.
11. *Integrity*: Living a life that is full of integrity is important to both religions and emphasised.
12. *Helping those in need*: Both Buddhists and Quakers tend to the poor, mentally-ill, dying, and incarcerated with incredible passion.
13. *The present moment*: Put talk about ‘being in the present moment’ and the importance of living in the here and now. Buddhism focuses on life as a stream that flows and Quakerism does not have sacraments because every moment of life is sacramental. Both religions focus on the beauty and bliss of this very life.

