

THE ANIMAL INSENSITIVITY SYNDROME

(An Empathy Deficit Disorder)

RECOGNITION & PREVENTION

By Dr. Michael W. Fox

Several years ago in my lectures I would use the term ‘animal-deprivation syndrome’, to describe an empathy deficit disorder of insensitivity and indifference toward animals that was acquired in early childhood. Today I regard this condition as an impaired sensitivity toward animals that may or may not be caused by a child being deprived of any meaningful contact with animals, since other factors are involved in the genesis of this animal-insensitivity syndrome. It is a cognitive and affective developmental disorder that I see as part of a larger problem of insensitivity and indifference to the Earth, which some regard as sacred, mother of all life. Ethical blindness that comes from a lack of empathy with other living beings and natural systems is linked to a lack of respect and understanding that when we harm animals and the Earth, we harm ourselves.

So I was heartened to see that author Richard Louv has written a book entitled *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* (Algonquin Books, 2006). This is the flip side of the coin that has ‘Heads, Nature’ on one side and ‘Tails, Animals’ on the other. In the common currency of compassion and respect, our transactions and relationships with each other, with other animals, and the Earth or natural world, should be framed within the Golden Rule*, where gold alone does not rule. This currency includes such ancient coins of wisdom as altruism, that is, enlightened selfishness; *ahimsa*, Sanskrit for not harming in any way, and *karma*, having prescience and understanding that what goes around, comes around: All our choices and actions have consequences. This is especially true with regard to our production of food and energy, and indirectly with our dietary choices, consumer habits and life styles. As I have discussed in earlier writings about our predominantly hunter-gatherer past the best hunters were probably the most empathetic; and in some cultural traditions they never participated in the killing and often neither the consumption of animal species with whom they had a particular affinity.

We harm animals when we lose such affinities; by destroying their natural habitats, and in making them suffer so that we may find new and profitable ways to cure our many self-made (anthropogenic) diseases. The actual prevention of disease is in another domain based on an entirely different currency, including shamanic healing and divination and elements of Eastern medicine, from what is still the norm in these sickening times.

DYSTOPIA & THE CULTURE OF HARM

The currency of unbridled exploitation and destruction of natural resources and ecosystems, and the wholesale commercial exploitation of animals, cannot continue because it is not sustainable. Yet some are prepared to wage war against opponents whom

they see as a threat to “Western civilization and progress.” Bullying, bribery, blackmail, lying, corruption and violence, behaviors that could have been addressed during childhood years and extinguished in the school room, playground and summer camp have become some of the cancers of communities, commerce and government. The utopian bubbles of the affluent few create dystopias for the many where mammon rules. One of the worst errors in reason and judgement is the world-wide proliferation of factory livestock farms – the intensive confinement systems that are stressful to the animals, promote disease, are environmentally damaging and also put consumers at risk. These animal concentration camps of the meat, dairy and poultry industries will only be phased out when there is greater consumer demand for organic, humane, socially just and ecologically sustainable animal produce for human and companion animal consumption. This money-driven, politically powerful enterprise is, like the mining, energy and timber industries, an unstoppable juggernaut when the voting, consumer public just ride along with it and on it.

Russian Count Peter Kropotkin envisioned the ideal human community like a functioning ecosystem of inter-dependent, democratically integrated individuals and species creating a matrix of mutually enhancing, symbiotic, micro and macro communities that he discovered in his studies of the co-evolved flora and fauna of the vast wild Steppes of his native land. (Finding no dictatorial hierarchy in Nature he coined the term “an-archy” in his book *Mutual Aid: A factor in Evolution* (1902). This now has negative societal associations and so I would instead use the term *Holarchy*). Students can easily comprehend the interdependence of different species sharing and helping maintain an ecosystem or functional life-community, gaining respect and a will to emulate such *mutualism* within their own communities. The prairie dog of North America’s Great Plains, for example, is a keystone species relied upon by the Burrowing owl and endangered Black-footed ferret and more than 150 other species. (www.americanprairie.org). Yet they have been sucked up and mashed in the millions by varmint vacuum operators hired by cattle ranchers renting and rending apart our public lands with their rattlesnake roundups and wolf and bison slaughter.

The sociology of mutualism is based on the sociobiology of symbiosis, mutually enhancing relationships as between the beneficial bacteria and other microorganisms in the soil and in our guts and the plants and us who cannot survive without them.

EARLY LEARNING & CULTURAL INFLUENCES

Adult rationalization, denial and ethical blindness are rooted in early childhood conditioning and desensitization leading to acceptance and eventual participation in many forms of animal exploitation and cruelty. Without question, these are cultural norms which children quickly learn to adopt to be accepted. This is vividly documented by British hunt saboteur Mike Huskisson showing children witnessing deer and fox hunting and being ritualistically “bloodied” and receiving parts of the murdered animals to take home either to eat or as prized trophies, mementoes of their presence at the kill. (See his book *Outfoxed: Take Two; Hunting the Hunters and Other Work for Animals*, published by Animal Welfare Information Service, www.acigawis.org.uk).

Nature Deficit Disorder leads ultimately to regarding and treating the living Earth as a non-living resource, just as the Animal-Insensitivity Syndrome can lead to animals being treated without feeling, as mere objects. Insensitive, indifferent, and cruel contact and experiences with animals during the early years, probably during a critical sensitization/desensitization developmental stage or period between 18-36 months of age, can mean a poorly developed and extremely self-limiting capacity to empathize with others, to be able to recognize, anticipate, experience and share other's feelings, and to express and deeply consider one's own.

In some countries such as India where I have worked with my wife Deanna Krantz, we have both witnessed how people simply can turn a blind eye to suffering animals and the polluted stream because they themselves are struggling to survive and there is no responsible person or office for them to seek help. Individuals who feel helpless become resigned fatalists or apathetic and resigned passers-by, immunized by the desensitization of repeated exposure to various harmful human activities and their consequences. Also in some situations intervention to help a suffering animal, to stop a stream from being poisoned by a tannery or a slaughterhouse, or report illegal logging and poaching could mean death threats and violence. (For details see our book *India's Animals: Helping the Sacred and the Suffering*, Create Space books, Amazon.com).

Observing another's suffering, and being unable to do anything to help, leads to learned helplessness by proxy. Seeing other's suffering, and being indifferent about it, is the next step toward the total disconnect of empathy, termed bystander apathy. A possible step after this is to observe and derive vicarious pleasure in witnessing another's plight. (see "Ways of Seeing: Animals in Life and Art". pp. 168-174 in *Animals & Nature First* by Michael W. Fox. Create Space books, Amazon.com). This is but one small step away from deliberate torture and calculated cruelty either perpetrated alone, or in participation with others as in the name of entertainment, sport, quasi-religious or cult ritual, and as some see it, experimental vivisection. In sum, on the one hand we have the individual propensity for sociopathic behavior arising from a lack of empathy and conscience as per the documented childhood cruelty toward animals with later criminal, homicidal violence and the culturally institutionalized forms of similar violence toward animals and our own kind from slaughter house to slaughter house and killing field to killing field.

DISASSOCIATION AND TREATING OTHERS AS OBJECTS

Our subjective identification with animals in our childhood years as well as our empathy and nascent bonding/sense of kinship with all life are affected by disassociation. This can be triggered when we witness others treating fellow creatures as objects, and then to avert discomfort we disassociate possibly as a defense mechanism. Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton termed this "splitting" which he discovered was going on in the minds of many Nazi war criminals that he interviewed concerning their gross acts of inhumanity and lapses of moral judgement.

So it can become second nature for a child to crush an insect on the ground under her foot without hesitation. I once witnessed such an instance on a rural railway station in

England. While a little girl and the people encircling her on the platform watched a silver moth flutter down to the girl's feet from the electric light above I saw her she suddenly put her boot over the exhausted creature and twist it into a grey smear. I was struck by the immediacy of the girl's reaction; not to rescue but to eradicate. What also stunned me was seeing the flow of conversation between the adults encircling her continue uninterrupted as they gazed with vacant faces at her slowly twisting and sliding rubber boot.

Disassociating facilitates our treating other sentient beings without empathy and as objects and seems to come easily to a species that has killed others for food during its biological history. In the live animal physiology course I took at veterinary school nobody dared or cared to stand up and voice concern or even question the pointlessness waste of life sometimes bordering on cruel vivisection. It is not difficult for many adults to live trap or experiment on animals especially if they belong to a group with shared values, as emphasized by fellow Englishman and hunter saboteur Mike Huskisson in his above mentioned book *Outfoxed: take Two*. Scientific curiosity may in part be an extension of childhood curiosity as with the perverse and calculated dismembering of insects, severing and impaling of earth worms and blowing up of frogs. Yet my first task, aged fifteen seeing practice at the local veterinary clinic was not to heal but to kill. I was asked by my dour veterinarian mentor Don Routledge if I knew how to use a captive bolt pistol which he handed to me when I said that I did. I asked me to go and euthanize an irreversibly ill kitten in the stables with the pistol. I saw that as a test and an initiation and executed this act of mercy without hesitation. But not until I had assessed the animal's condition for myself.

Purity of heart (intentions) and clarity of mind (consequences and ethical cost) can help correct some of the less severe forms of disassociation and attitude formation. Disassociation may serve to distance care-givers and health care providers from their patients' suffering and fears and also allay "burn out". By the same token, disassociation can lower the quality and standards of care which require some degree of empathic understanding in their execution to prevent dehumanization in the work environment. These are codified in protocols of standard operating procedures in the better hospitals and emergency services to protect the rights and best interests of patients, and in the animal welfare and protection laws and regulations for the animals used in biomedical research facilities. But still far too many animals suffer needlessly in laboratories medical, commercial and military, around the world; many species are still denied any legal protection against cruelty and suffering.

SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS OF CARING FOR ANIMALS

Becoming desensitized to animal suffering and then treating animals as mere things, as objects devoid of sentience, is part of the same currency as treating fellow humans as objects rather than as subjects. Such dehumanization, coupled with demonization, can lead to genocide, and more commonly to 'speciessicide.' This is the annihilation of animal species and their communities that are perceived as a threat, obstacle to progress or some immediate need-gratification.

Our attitudes toward other animals, degree of ethical concern and moral consideration can mirror our regard for each other, for better or for worse. When collectively, our hearts and minds are open to the tragedy of reality and we really see and feel all that is going on around us, empathizing fully with other's suffering, times will begin to change for the better. As Deanna Krantz and I emphasize in our book about our work for animals and the environment in India we noted a significant change in the community once our presence and services were known. Where people would formerly walk past an injured animal by the roadside in apparent indifference, they would bring the animal to us or call us for help once they knew that we provided a free mobile veterinary emergency service. Clearly such active compassion was catalyzed by our supplanting fatalistic despair in the community with regard to the animals with *hope* for animals needing emergency care and humane intervention in instances of animal cruelty and neglect reported to us.

Why does it matter if animals must be made to suffer and die, and the natural environment be obliterated, so long as human needs and wants are satisfied? For many people it obviously does not matter, even when their values and actions harm those who do care and who feel that it does matter; and that it is morally wrong to harm and kill animals and destroy the natural environment. The ethics of compassion and *ahimsa* (non-harming) mandate that we find the least harmful ways to satisfy our basic needs, and relinquish those wants, appetites, and desires that cause more harm than good. Such renunciation is seen by some as the only hope for humanity and for our sanity: To live simply so that others may simply live.

Animal suffering matters because it is a matter of conscience. Deliberate cruelty toward animals and acceptance and indifference toward their plight is unconscionable; a zoopathic state of mind. This parallels the behavior, and cognitive and affective impairment, of the sociopath, and of the 'ecopath' who has no twinge of conscience over the destruction of the natural environment. Where there is a lack of empathy, of feeling for others, there can be neither concern nor conscience.

In his book *The Denial of Death*, social anthropologist Ernest Becker wrote that our awareness of our personal mortality creates a degree of anxiety that drives much of our behavior. This spawned the so called Terror Management Theory which identifies various coping strategies people and societies adopt to defuse the existential anxiety caused by awareness of our own mortality. Animal protection and rights advocate Michael Mountain contends: "to alleviate the anxiety we feel over our animal nature, [that we too are mortal beings] we try to separate ourselves from our fellow animals and to exert control over the natural world. We tell ourselves that we're superior to them and that they exist for our benefit. We treat them as commodities and resources, use them as biomedical "models" or "systems" in research, and force them to perform for our entertainment." (See *Denial of Death and the Relationship between Humans and Other Animals* by Lori Marino and Michael Mountain *Anthrozoös* Vol. 28 , Iss. 1, 2015).

I do not fully accept this theory when it comes to the often cruel and indifferent mistreatment of animals by individuals and societies because other factors are significant such as dissociation to avoid the pain of empathy which can underlie passive acceptance

and apparent indifference. Also, I would theorize that cruelty toward animals in childhood has less to do with self-awareness of mortality than a perverse desire to see how the organism responds to being harmed and with identification with the other's vulnerability and an unconscious desire to wipe it out.

ANTIDOTES AND SPONTANEOUS EMPATHY

The antidotes to inhumanity are many. Those in Richard Louv's book should be coupled with meaningful contact with companion and other animals, with parental supervision and humane instruction to foster respect, self-restraint, gentleness, patient observation and understanding. Humane education immunizes children against inhumanity and helps keep the doorway of compassion open to the divine and the sacred presence of other beings and our sense of belonging through kinship with all life.

Thomas Merton's asserts "Life is this simple: we are living in a world that is absolutely transparent and the divine is shining through it all the time. This is not just a nice story or a fable, it is true." This reminds me of the innocent purity and clarity of childhood perception. Walt Whitman captured this key to empathy in his poem *Leaves of Grass* (1900):

There was a child went forth every day.
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

Life is often a challenging navigation between the existential antipodes of Eros and Thanatos. On many occasion we are possessed by the various daemons and demiurges of greed, jealousy, fear, hatred, lust and the other "deadly sins" – the ethically unacceptable behaviors of a moral and civil society. At other times we are inspired by the transfiguring sublime beauty evident within us and around us yet so rarely glimpsed because our self-involvement consumes our time and lives.

I wish that every child-in-spirit in each and all of us can recall the first illumining moment of self-realization beyond words, ineffable indeed, feeling at one with "all things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small." Every child has the ability and instinct to seek such engagement and immersion in the phenomenal world, Nature, which is *rapture*; total self-involvement in the Other – "the first object he look'd upon, that object he became." When we remember such spontaneous moments, on some occasions guided and facilitated by others, including other animals and plants, we may bring a greater sense of the sacred, of wholeness, wholesomeness and holiness of purpose and perception into our ephemeral lives. This unitive experience was considered an essential spiritual rite of passage and initiation for adolescents in some indigenous cultures as through the vision quest of many Native American Indian tribes – a metamorphic transformation from childhood-centeredness to a consciousness of realms within a greater whole beyond the self, both incorporate and ex-corporate.

I published the following letter in my syndicated newspaper column *Animal Doctor* (July 11th 2017) from a mother whose son demonstrated empathic concern for animals at an early age:

Dear Dr. Fox. I read your recent column about the need to bring more environmental and humane education into schools and applaud the efforts of your daughter Camilla with Project Coyote, and others who are doing this. I work for Pro Animale in Germany whose book Memento you recently reviewed, and I want to share this about my son's natural empathy toward animals which was quite independent of any influences from me during his early years.

Since he started talking when he was only 2 years old I could tell that he has had a very special sense and empathy for animals and their feelings and needs. When he once saw a just hatched chick in an incubator at a fair, he did not say "how cute", he immediately looked concerned and said it looks for its mother we need to find her. In a wildlife park he saw two raccoons in an enclosure sitting by the fence and said they look sad and do not want to be fenced in but free. When we were on a boat ride to see seals on a sandbank the tour operators suddenly let a net down on the bottom of the sea and fished out crabs and other creatures from there to show to the people and tell them about them. Yukon, 3 years old then, got really mad at the seamen and told them to let the crabs immediately back into the water, because they do not want to be taken out. Unfortunately we were not heard by the seamen even when I said that it is very harmful in general for the creatures on the bottom of the sea when they let a net down every time they have a boat ride to the sandbanks. They did not understand because they thought since they put the creatures they fished out in a tank with water and later back into the sea, that is was okay. When one person said to Yukon "look at these interesting animals in the tank", Yukon responded "I look at the animals who are in the sea where they want to be" and looked down into the water where he couldn't see any animals but I think he imagined seeing them there. I was so amazed how a three year old can be more understanding of animals and their needs than grown up people. I am sure you can tell I am very proud of him.

S.B., Sennfeld, Bavaria, Germany.

DEAR S.B. I am sure that many parents reading your letter will have had similar experiences with their young children's reactions to animals affirming my contention that they have a natural affinity for fellow creatures which is the foundation for empathy and compassion as they mature. But cultural norms with regard to accepted treatments of animals and the attitudes and reactions of adults can either facilitate or inhibit the development of empathy, which some regard as being a sissy and not facing reality. Indeed empathy can be a burden especially when not supported by others and when not expressed in appropriate action or choice.

Your son reminds me of my younger daughter Mara who, around the same age as Yukon, said that she was going to friends at Thanksgiving to eat turkey. Her stepmother and I asked her if she knew what the word turkey meant. Since she did not know, we gently told her that "turkey" was a bird. Her immediate response was one of shock and she exclaimed that she would never eat a bird or any animal. She later told us that at the gathering she refused to eat any turkey but was told that it was OK because the farmer had killed the bird. From that time on, with no prompting from us, she decided to become a vegetarian. My other two children Camilla and Mike Jr. decided at a later age to become vegan for ethical, humane and environmental reasons.

In sum, all children, with rare exception, have the capacity to identify with and show empathy toward others, the absence of which has been linked to a lack of conscience, feeling for others,

dissociation and sociopathic behaviors in later life. It is an attribute best guided by example and enabling the child to make informed choices and to share and question openly, without ridicule, how they feel about animals and how they think they should be treated. For more details see the seminal book by my former graduate student Dr. Randall Lockwood, co-authored with Frank K. Ascione. Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence, published by Purdue University Press. 1998.

A child's sense of wonder, if it is nurtured and is not crushed or left to wither, blossoms into the adult sense of the sacred; an ethical sensibility of respect for the sanctity of each and every life. Such sensibility is invaluable in difficult times as in these, where we see so much abuse of life and irreverent treatment of other beings with whom we share the kinship of sentience and of genetic ancestry.

A child's sense of curiosity leads to natural science and instrumental knowledge. Combined with a sense of wonder, curiosity leads to imagination and creativity, while the sense of the sacred is the foundation for an ethical and just society, and empathetic, caring and fulfilling relationships, human and non-human. This empathy-based bioethical and moral sensibility that gives equally fair consideration to all members of the biotic community, human and non-human, plant and animal, is an ideal that may yet become a reality, provided the potential for such development is properly nurtured, and reinforced by example, in early childhood.

One may ask "How can we deal with the existential anxiety that is engendered by the awareness of our own mortality"? I think this is not so much in the mind of the child to consider mortality but rather fear of abandonment; and chronically, lack of attachment during the critical period of socialization, as with dogs and other mammals. Adults suffering from attachment-deficit disorder (often associated with parental abuse) are likely to show varying degrees of impaired empathy. Where there is extreme impairment there can be pathological compensation to reduce personal suffering by making others suffer – classic redirected aggression. (The pleasure of release from anxiety sometimes leads to sadism and eroticism). Or there is release/catharsis in the vicarious enjoyment of witnessing the suffering of others as in the coyote-killing "contests" where families come to watch dogs tear caged coyotes and chained bears apart.

Young boys especially may seek to destroy small creatures because they project their own vulnerabilities upon them. Obliterating the symbolic "other" is an act of nihilism, symptomatic of pathological narcissism and of a deeply harmed psyche. Such actions can never fully assuage the existential angst and rage, so they tend to escalate in severity and criminal degree. There is also the innate fear or phobia of certain species such as snakes, spiders and mice to consider, boys predominantly showing the fright-fight response and girls the fright-flight response, such reactions being intensified by highly contagious, (socially facilitated) group panic reactions and associated fear, hatred and loathing, of others.

Totally antithetical to these reaction formations is that of the dedicated "rescuer" who identifies with the victim or sufferer, many doing great animal welfare and humanitarian work but others becoming obsessed, often after some deep emotional trauma of loss. This

can undermine their own health, culminating in animal hoarding and unintended animal cruelty and suffering.

Even children of good nature and nurture are just as likely to *accept* rather than question and reject the too often cruel, demeaning and indifferent treatment of others they may witness or learn about because it is accepted by their peers and class or caste, community and race, especially when it comes to the mistreatment animals raised for human consumption and of the poor exploited as cheap labor and conscripted into wars.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMANE EDUCATION

Young children must be informed as to why it is in everyone's best interests to care for all animals and the environment; and what they can do to help. Jane Goodall has set up environmental and humane education programs (<https://www.rootsandshoots.org>) in many schools around the world, as have others concerned about animals and the natural environment. These include the National Humane Education Society (<https://nhes.org/education-2>); my daughter Camilla Fox's Project Coyote (<http://www.projectcoyote.org/programs/keeping-it-wild/>) and another of my former graduate students Prof. Marc Bekoff (see *Rewilding Our Hearts: Building Pathways of Compassion and Coexistence*).

All educators need to engage young minds with these concerns (involvement is evolvment) and sow seeds of hope for their own good and for the revolution in planetary consciousness, conscience and conservation. Wisdom speaks when we listen with our hearts as when we enter a forest and the forest enters us and when we empathize with other creatures great and small.

Such non-profit educational organizations as the 4-H Club (www.4-H.org) and Future Farmers of America (www.ffa.org) have a significant nation-wide outreach in the U.S. and the yet unrealized potential to advance both humane and environmental education for young people beyond any and all political and ideological limitations. Humane and environmental education along with basic animal and environmental care instruction with appropriate award badges for Boy and Girl Scouts need wider promotion..

Children ought to learn that every life matters; animals and plants have natural purposes and therefore extrinsic as well as intrinsic value as well as a will to live. Understanding that some of these purposes (and wills) such as predation, living by killing others for food and also food territory and mates are natural and necessary for the greater good of the animal and plant communities. But in such natural acts of killing there is no unquestioned justification for humans to act in similar ways in their everyday lives.

Children will be enthralled to discover how so many animals, plants and microorganisms benefit each other and us, from pollinating honey bees and rain-gathering forests to the good bacteria in the soil and in our guts without whom we cannot live. There is a wealth of educational materials to help children understand how similar and often identical our basic needs and feelings are to those of many other animal species, notably how they too

can show fear, experience anxiety, anticipation, grief; exhibit empathy and altruism; express pleasure in social greeting and care-giving; evidence joy, self-restraint and creative imagination while engaging in play. Many have physical and sensory attributes from speed, strength and survival skills, to sonar echo-location and celestial navigation abilities which put a big question on the notion of human “superiority”. Such knowledge can deepen respect and appreciation for other living beings especially when coupled with learning how animals have benefitted humanity in a myriad ways since the beginning of recorded history and continue to do so today even as our companions, teachers and healers.

This brings in the question of human choice, ethical decision making and how best to direct our relative freedom of will and impulses to avoid harming others and acting like predators, parasites and invasive infestations. Such analogous behaviors we see on occasion in our own species still ruled by anthropocentrism and misled by chauvinistic and other prejudicial, even genocidal ideologies and societies. We can also examine our own assumed rights, entitlements and cultural traditions against those within our communities and beyond. Is there more or less accord or more conflict arising from our lack of family planning around the world with a rising population with an insatiable demand for meat, fish and other foods from animals on the one hand while millions of others are landless and starving?

To shield children from such realities “until they are old enough to understand” is a form of denial and obfuscation that I have confronted in giving talks to school children who, from middle-school on should be encouraged and guided into this realm of human existence and ultimate responsibility. Cultural and familial acceptance of animal cruelty and environmental abuse establish norms of attitude, values and behavior which call for cautious and honest examination in the classroom without pre-judgement but enabling students to accept the Socratic view of a life unexamined being a life unlived.

Like our physical health, our mental health and Earth health are deeply interconnected. For us to be whole in body, mind and spirit, our connections with each other in our communities and cultures and beyond with animals and the earth must be properly established in early childhood in order to prevent the harmful consequences of the Nature Deficit Disorder and Animal-Insensitivity Syndrome. Our collective inertia over doing anything constructive to address such critical issues as human population growth, over-consumption, pollution, global warming, and the plight of domestic and wild animals will then become something of the past. Then initiatives, local and international, to promote planetary CPR – conservation, preservation, and restoration – and to promote the humane treatment of animals, will become a reality, because, in the final analysis, it is enlightened self-interest to do so.

When we harm animals and the Earth, we harm ourselves, and the generations to come will all suffer the consequences of our actions and inaction. As the Iroquois Confederacy advised, the good of the life community mandates that we think seven generations ahead, and seven generations back. This translates into the bioethical consideration of

consequences, and in practice means that those who do not learn from the mistakes of their ancestors shall live only to repeat them.

* This Rule, embraced by all world religions, is to treat others as we would have them treat us.

AN END NOTE ABOUT EMPATHY

Empathy is the bridge to experience self-transcendence as exemplified by the I-Thou relationship described by philosopher Martin Buber. This is comparable in some respects to the Christian's agape and the mystic's ecstatic rapture in the feeling of unity and oneness. In their book *In Search of Self: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Personhood*, (Grand Rapids, MI; Erdmans, 2011, p. 9) J. Wenzel van Huyssteen and Erik P. Weibe state that "it is through the transcendence of empathy that one gains the ability to separate self from other and to see the other as fully other in relation to the self. Through the transcendence of imagination, one receives release from the past through openness to a new future."

There is now considerable literature to further the exploration and understanding of empathy and its growing recognition as an essential element in child rearing and education; its evolutionary significance in us and other species; its contribution to healing, to the arts and its emerging potential to transform dystopian societies into sane and humane Earth communities. But as I emphasized in my book *Bringing Life to Ethics: Global Bioethics for a Humane Society* (State University of New York Press 2001) such transformation will be illusory if our collective empathy is limited by anthropocentrism and objective, instrumental rationalism and does not embrace all sentient beings and the environment which we of the Earth community share.

For instance, see:

1. Brener, Milton E., *Evolution and Empathy: The Genetic Factor in the Rise of Humanism*. McFarland, 2008.

2. Prosocial Development - Purdue University
www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/ISSBD/documents/eisenberg2015.pdf

3. Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice

https://www.researchgate.net/.../274807393_Empathy_and_Moral_Development_Implic..

4. Empathic Development empathicdevelopment.net/

5. Goetz, J.L. et al Compassion: An Evolutionary Analysis and Empirical Review
Psychol Bull. 2010 May; 136(3): 351–374. doi: 10.1037/a0018807

6. Krznaric, R., *Empathy: Why it Matters, and How to Get it*. Penguin Random House
NY 2014.

7. Rifkin, J., *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in
Crisis*. TarcherPerigree, NY, 2009.

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