

## Making Peace with the Animal Kingdom

*The fear of you and the dread of you  
shall be upon every beast of the earth,  
and upon every bird of the heavens;  
With all wherewith the ground teemeth,  
and all the fishes of the sea,  
into your hand are they delivered.  
Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you;*

The Bible, 1st Book of Moses, 9,2

*As long as there are slaughterhouses,  
there will also be battlefields.*

Leo Tolstoy

*As long as humans torment, torture, and kill animals,  
we will have war.*

Bernard Shaw

*Just like human beings,  
animals experience joy and pain, happiness and unhappiness;  
they are moved by the same emotions as we are.*

Charles Darwin

*The issue of animals (...)  
is inextricably intertwined with the issue of human beings,  
so that every improvement in our relationship to the animal world  
infallibly constitutes progress on the path  
toward human happiness.*

Émile Zola

*The day will come,  
when humans will judge the killing of an animal  
exactly the same way  
that they today judge the killing of a human being.*

Leonardo da Vinci

(and similarly by Albert Einstein)

*I can imagine a world – because it has always existed –  
in which human beings and animals enter into a covenant  
and live together in peace and harmony,  
a world that day by day is transformed by the magic of love,  
a world that is free from death.  
This is not a dream.*

Henry Miller in “Sexus”

*The dog that we expected has arrived.  
Where she was before, she must have been beaten;  
she is terrified of everything.  
The kisses that she gets from Marie-Sonaly do not help.  
She does not succeed in settling in  
Her name: Pity.  
One could almost translate this with compassion.*

Frère Roger (in Taizé)

Sunday morning. I used to have to go to church at this time. Today, I go to my bathtub. (Are we dealing with the same person?) In any case, I am in the bathtub and I notice some tiny animals on the tiles on the wall. They are very thin and maybe 3 millimeters (1/8 of an inch) long and they have many legs. I decide to regard them as ants. Where do they come from? What do they eat? What are they doing on this wall? I become curious, for they are my fellow creatures in evolution, they are real living beings, and they are a part of the **one** existence, so they must be cosmically related to me in some way. I watch them on their Sunday walk on the vertical wall and I see how they disappear into a little hole. That is their apartment. They have actually built themselves an apartment in the plaster between the tiles. What occurred in them, as they did this? Where did they get the enthusiasm and the power to be able to do something like that? Normally one sees them as a pest and cleans them off.

Here, two worlds collide with each other, and one of them, the older one, has to give way. This may be fully in line with Darwin, but is it also right in a higher sense? Do we humans really have the right to destroy an element of life as if this were natural, just because it doesn't fit into our own system of life? Is the ants' system of life wrong – or is ours? Maybe our own system of life is not quite correctly adapted to the higher order of Creation? Is there a possibility for non-violent co-existence? Just a few decades ago such thinking would have been characterized as absurd, but with every further consideration, and with every new experience, it today becomes increasingly relevant. Maybe there is a possibility for a kind of co-existence that encompasses all living beings? We will see. Chaos research has taught me one thing: things that collide on the existing level of order can harmonize at a higher level of order. If enmities arise within a certain system, they can transform into friendship at the level of a system of a higher order. The solution of many issues consists of finding a higher level order.

On days when I am lazy, I lie down on a meadow, push aside the grass, and observe life on the ground underneath. I have sometimes used a magnifying glass because I have been so surprised and awed at what I saw. The earth is alive everywhere. I do not know how many hundred or thousand little beings inhabit a single square yard. If we take this entire layer – containing bugs, ants, worms, snails, spiders, lice, all the way to the microorganisms – and add it all up, then we have a population that we can no longer ignore in our future plans for peace on earth. We must assume that they play an important role in the organism of the biosphere. From this point of view, it is no longer natural to cover the earth with concrete or to build a house somewhere, without first contacting the inhabitants there.

There have been times and cultures when this kind of thinking was still clear. According to ancient philosophers such as Thales, Pythagoras, or Empedocles, the unity of life was a natural fact that they perceived mentally-spiritually. This fact made it clear that there is a kinship between human beings and animals, just as we find with St. Francis of Assisi and the Cathars, and it resulted in a correspondingly ethical approach to the animal world. In the following I will describe to what extent we today can confirm this approach and use it for our work.