Oppressor Minds & Mechanisms that Can Dishearten & Disempower Animal Advocates: What We – and the Animals – Are Up Against

By Karen Davis, PhD, President of United Poultry Concerns
It’s All About the Money – and Much More

Illustration by Nigel Burroughs
I. Human Subjugation of All Other Animal Species is Biblically Ordained.

“God gave us these animals to establish dominion over and fill with fear and dread”
II. Reduction of Other Animals to “Behaving Organisms”
III. Absorption of Living Creatures into a Utilitarian Lexicon of Products, Objects & Cynical Sentimentality
IV. Rhetorical Transmutation of Oppressor *Use* to Animal Ontology – from this is how we *use* them to “this is who they *are*.”
V. Other Animal Species Benefit From and Are Happy Being “Domesticated.” Animals are grateful to be elevated to a “higher purpose” in being sacrificed for humans.

Photo by Carol Guzy
Solid White Albacore Tuna in water
VI. Animals are a mere “byproduct” of the human activity for which they suffer and die.
Conclusion: If you want to abuse an animal and maintain a clean conscience about it, you will invoke arguments along one or more of these lines: the slave/animal doesn’t feel, doesn’t care, is complicit, is “incidental,” is an illusion, is happy. You will say things like: “God gave us these animals to use.” “Humans are at the top of the food chain.” “We treat these animals humanely.”
Mechanisms Employed to Downgrade Animal Activists
I. The Whole Global System of Animal Exploitation

Photo by Rob Ostermaier, Gazette Newspapers (Maryland)
II. Blistering agribusiness rhetoric designed to silence objections:

“How the hell can you compare the feelings of a hen with those of a human being?”
III. Soothing agribusiness rhetoric designed to silence objections
Help Us, Please. We Belong in A Green World. Not These Metal Cages.
IV. “YOU are EMOTIONAL.
YOU are ANTHROPOMORPHIC.
WE are ‘SCIENCE-BASED.’”
V. “WE protect animals from predators and other perils of living in the wild.”
Agribusiness Coalition Opposes Fire Safety Controls in Animal Confinement Facilities

Despite thousands of years of domestication, chickens are essentially the wild jungle fowl of their ancestry, with the same cravings for lush soil, trees, and activities suited to the tropical forests they originated in.

UPC Sanctuary hens rescued from battery cages. Photo by Susan Rayfield
Karen Davis with UPC Sanctuary Chickens
Photo by Frank Johnston, The Washington Post
For more information, visit

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