

# The Moral Psychology Of Human Attitudes To Animals: Unlocking the Secrets of our Relationship with the Animal Kingdom

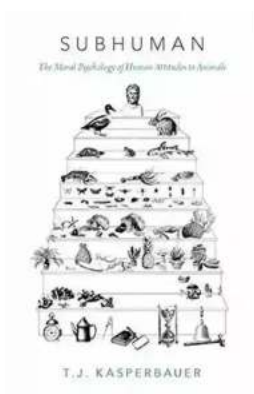


Animals have always held a significant place in human society, from being our companions to providing food and labor. However, our attitudes towards animals have evolved over time, and today, moral psychology plays a crucial role in shaping how we view and interact with the animal kingdom.

## **The Power of Empathy**

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, is a fundamental aspect of moral psychology that influences our attitudes towards animals. Research has shown that individuals who possess higher levels of

empathy tend to have greater concern for the welfare of animals. This empathy extends beyond domesticated animals to include wildlife and even insects, reflecting our innate connection with all creatures.



## Subhuman: The Moral Psychology of Human Attitudes to Animals

by T.J. Kasperbauer(1st Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
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### The Influence of Culture and Upbringing

Our attitudes towards animals are strongly influenced by cultural norms and upbringing. Different societies hold varying beliefs and practices when it comes to animals. For instance, some cultures revere certain animal species as sacred, while others may view them merely as a source of food or entertainment. These cultural norms shape our moral psychology and subsequently influence our attitudes towards animals.

### Anthropocentrism versus Ecocentrism

One of the central debates in the field of moral psychology is the conflict between anthropocentric and ecocentric views. Anthropocentrism places humans at the center of moral consideration, prioritizing human interests and needs over those

of animals. Ecocentrism, on the other hand, takes a more holistic approach, recognizing the intrinsic value of all living beings and the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Understanding the interplay between these contrasting perspectives is essential in comprehending the varying attitudes towards animals within different societies.

## **Psychological Defense Mechanisms**

Human beings often employ psychological defense mechanisms to justify their treatment or exploitation of animals. These mechanisms, such as cognitive dissonance and moral disengagement, allow individuals to alleviate feelings of guilt or discomfort associated with harming or using animals for personal gain. Recognizing these defense mechanisms is crucial in addressing the moral conflicts between humans and animals and encouraging more compassionate attitudes.

## **The Role of Education and Awareness**

Education and awareness play a vital role in shaping our moral psychology towards animals. Teaching empathy, compassion, and ethical considerations in schools and other educational institutions can foster a better understanding of the moral importance of treating animals with respect and dignity. Increased awareness campaigns about animal welfare issues can also prompt individuals to reevaluate their attitudes and take positive action to improve the lives of animals.

## **Building a Sustainable Future**

As the global population continues to grow and our impact on the environment becomes more evident, it is crucial to reassess our attitudes towards animals. By recognizing the moral psychology behind our interactions with animals, we can make informed decisions that promote their well-being and the sustainability of

our planet. Striving towards a harmonious coexistence with the animal kingdom is not only crucial for the welfare of animals but also for the future of humanity itself.

The moral psychology of human attitudes towards animals is a complex, multifaceted topic that requires careful examination. Empathy, cultural influences, conflicting perspectives, defense mechanisms, education, and awareness all contribute to our attitudes and behaviors towards the animal kingdom. By understanding these factors, we can work towards fostering a more compassionate and sustainable relationship with animals, ultimately benefiting both them and ourselves.

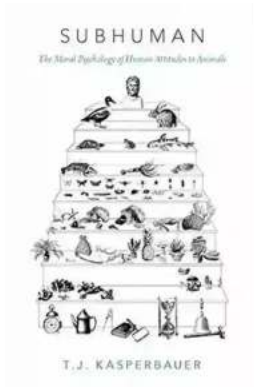
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When Harambe, a now-famous gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo, was shot for endangering a small child, animal rights activists protested, calling into question moral reasoning that privileges the possibility of injury to a human over definite violence to an animal. Many others, though less vehement in their objection, voiced the same questions: was the gorilla any worse than the negligent parents? Doesn't Harambe have rights just like you and me?

How do we decide what animals deserve and how we ought to treat them? To what extent are our attitudes towards animals embedded in our subconscious and immune to reason? The foundations of our moral attitudes to animals are more complex than many may appreciate. Subhuman takes an interdisciplinary approach to these questions, drawing from research in philosophy, neuroscience, psychology, law, history, sociology, economics, and anthropology, to unearth surprising revelations about human relationships with animals. T.J. Kasperbauer argues provocatively that behind our positive and negative attitudes to animals is an enduring concern that animals pose a threat to our humanness. Namely, our need to ensure animals' inferiority to human beings affects both our kindness and cruelty to animals. Kasperbauer develops this idea by looking at research on the

phenomenon of dehumanization, revealing that our attitudes to other humans are predicted and reflected in our treatment of other species.

In making his case, Kasperbauer provides a critical survey of leading theories that range over the role of animals in human evolutionary history, the psychology of meat-eating and keeping pets, feelings of fear and disgust toward animals, the use of animal minds to determine their moral status, and the "expanding moral circle" hypothesis. By exploring the psychological obstacles humans face in meeting ethical demands, Kasperbauer sets forth new and fascinating ways of thinking about our moral obligations to animals, and how we might correct them.



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