

# From Empathy to (a Critique of) Ideology

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# From Empathy to Compassion

- ▶ Morality and Ethics
- ▶ The case against empathy:
  1. Unreliable
  2. Unevenly spread
  3. Irrational
- ▶ Empathy vs. compassion, Mitgefühl vs. Mitleid/Anteilnahme
- ▶ The difference to another person is known and it takes reflection to engage in another ones situation, empathy becomes a cognitive act, it becomes compassion

- ▶ Compassion as a guiding principle
- ▶ «Harm no one, but help, as far as you can, everybody” (Arthur Schopenhauer)
- ▶ Empathy is highly motivational
- ▶ Leidensvergessenheit (oblivion of suffering)
- ▶ “One has to be blind, not to see, that at the core humans and animals are the same” (Arthur Schopenhauer)
- ▶ Pathocentric
- ▶ Natural background (beware of natural fallacies!)





Jo-Anne McArthur  
[www.weanimals.org](http://www.weanimals.org)

# Capitalism

- ▶ Former Societies:  
Commodity-Money-Commodity (C-M-C)
- ▶ Capitalism:  
Money-Commodity-(More) Money (M-C-M')
- ▶ Surplus value and exploitation
- ▶ Capitalism can be overcome
- ▶ Social relations become relations of things



“In war and peace, arena and slaughterhouse, from the slow death of the elephant overpowered by primitive human hordes with the aid of the first planning to the perfected exploitation of the animal world today,

the unreasoning creature has always suffered at the hands of reason.” (Horkheimer/Adorno)

“No one is allowed to impose pain, suffering and damage to animals without **rational** cause.”

“For the being endowed with reason, however, concern for the unreasoning animal is idle. Western civilization has left that to women.

[...] The woman was smaller and weaker, between her and man there was a difference she could not overcome, a difference set by nature, the most shaming, degrading agency possible within the male society. When domination of nature is the true goal, biological inferiority remains the ultimate stigma, the weakness imprinted by nature, the mark which invites violence.” (Horkheimer/Adorno)

Social Contract Theory

# Ideology

- ▶ homogenous, a guideline for actions, rationalizing, legitimizing, universalizing, naturalizing
- ▶ “It is well known that the accusation to be ideological is only made towards others, never with respect to oneself” (Louis Althusser)
- ▶ Carnism: “the belief system in which eating certain animals is considered ethical and appropriate”
  - ▶ 1. The contradiction remains superfluous (Still: Another relation to animals is possible)
  - ▶ 2. Concept of individualization
- ▶ “An ideology is a shared set of beliefs, as well as the practices that **reflect** these beliefs”-- they form them!

Materialistic and Marxian approach: It is not because animals are of less value, that we kill them. But because we kill them, they are of less value.

- ▶ Against Consumerism
- ▶ Against a complicity of veganism and capitalism
- ▶ «Do not let yourself be impressed with the abstract concept of liberty. Whose liberty? It does not mean the liberty of one individual towards another. It means the liberty of capital to suppress the worker.»  
(Karl Marx)  
«Whose liberty? It does not mean the liberty of one individual towards another. It means the liberty of humans to suppress the animals.»





# Conclusion

- ▶ Avoid two mistakes:
  - ▶ 1. Leave out the social conditions (traditional ethics)
  - ▶ 2. Leave out ethics (Leftists/Marxism)
- ▶ Compassion: Living on the razor's edge
- ▶ “Not the softness of empathy is questionable, but that it is restricted: It is never enough.”. (Horkheimer/Adorno)