

Animals and education

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Education regarding animals is a key for any reform that we wish to propose in the future. Law plays an indispensable role in this area to better regulate society's regulations and making a commitment to the future.

I speak here of animals and not of the "animal", as if it were a reasoning entity. I refer to animals with whom we share our environment and with whom we maintain different types of relations, with some close proximity, such as companion animals, but also with animals of production, with wild animals or with animals that are put in spectacles or used in experimentation.

When we speak of respect for animal, what are we referring to? What does it imply for our society? What does it oblige us to do as individuals, as a society, as members of a State of Law? What strategies should be used to effectively realize respect for animals?

Respect is the understanding and recognition of the uniqueness of someone. Understanding is the first premise and the acceptance of their intrinsic value and dignity.¹ In practice, this consists of something as simple as evaluating the interests that belong to someone, acceptance these and protecting these interests. As such, respect for animals comes from a better understanding of their nature, of their uniqueness, of their dignity, of their interests and safeguarding and protecting the same. This is the principle that inspires a work group of which I form part that is based in Paris which is dedicated to searching for new forms of including respect for animals within education.²

Whether we "like" animals or not, they do form part of our society. I saw this consciously: they are part of our society. For many centuries, perhaps, it has been possible to turn our backs on the reality that we share the same vital space, but scientific knowledge, for a long time now, has put before our eyes two key pieces of data that are greatly relevant: that animals have their own culture and that they have the same sensation of pain as we do. If we ask ourselves how many of our fellow citizens find it "natural" to assume these two pieces of information, the result may be disheartening. However, even without having to understand it explicitly, society demands more and more a new conscience that favors animals; an attitude of public respect for animals. As such, in order to overcome this apparent contradiction, -demand for the improvement of the situation of animals, effective creation of public policies to achieve this and ignorance of what really needs to be done to achieve this goal-, the key is education.

Introducing education that teaches respect for animals at all levels of education and how to regulate their insertion into today's society is a direct consequence of the role that the State assumes in regulating society's needs and demands. It has to do with introducing training courses for teachers and specific courses in each level of teaching, including, of course, professional and university education.

A few months ago, the Amsterdam's City Hall published a very interesting document on how improving public policies regarding animals had led to a decrease in violence and aggression in the social environment. Holland is one of the pioneering countries in the creation of a help hotline for animal abuse and a police force specifically trained in rescuing abused animals. It is one more example, among many

1 Vid. HALL, B., [Reseña bibliográfica de Adela Cortina, Las fronteras de la persona. El valor de los animales, la dignidad de los humanos](#)

2 Vid. BRELS, S., Table ronde sur l' "Animal et l'enseignement", Palais du Luxembourg à Paris, 16 décembre 2013

others, of the positive results that come from an effective public education policy on the protection and respect for animals.

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