

Essay Sample

Excerpt from: **Zoology on the Table: a plea for more compassionate conservation**

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Logically, if these scientists view humans as exceptional and above all other creatures, then naturally they will “[deny] emotions and moral intelligence to animals” regardless of what the data show (Bekoff, 314). Those that support the “callous slaughter and exploitation” of beyond-human animals, such as eating them, cannot simultaneously believe in “the experience of animals as numinous,” regardless of their education level (Crist, 56). In order to perform any heinous act on a beyond-human animal “their subjectivity has [to be] dismantled,” giving way for the abuser to demote them “cognitively and perceptually” to objects (Crist, 56). Eileen Crist claims that “it has been helpful, probably necessary” to consider beyond-human animals and their homes as “object-like” so as to extract them as resources, including as for food (55). Wallach et al warn that reducing all of nonhuman nature to “[being] only good for the benefits it provides” humans and “heavily promoting instrumental value” will fill the conservation field with “self-interested motivations,” effectively harming countless beyond-human beings in the process (“Summoning Compassion,” 1261). With practices of not only testing on beyond-human animals, but employing campaigns that actively harm them and their homes, the scientific community will deny beyond-human animal intelligence and objectify them.

Of course, professional, well-educated, and scholarly scientists completely ignoring data that prove the vastness of non-human intelligence sounds absurd. Marc Bekoff simply calls it “bad biology” as these scientists ignore the “well-accepted ideas about evolutionary continuity” that illustrate beyond-human emotions and intelligence (314). And while Bekoff may be right, many identify “cognitive dissonance” as the culprit (Crist, 56; Rothgerber and Rosenfeld). For someone to experience cognitive dissonance, “an individual’s behavior” must be “inconsistent with their self-concept,” such as a person denying data yet conceptualizing themselves as a professional scientist (Aronson). Many psychologists point towards language that masks the truth and physical proximity of the animals far from the consumers to explain the average person's consumption of animals (Plous). However, for the scientists who eat their animals of study, Canadian biologist Mark Siddall gives a contradictory justification (Siddall and Rack). Instead of distance allowing for the cognitive dissonance to form, Siddall claims people eat “what they’re familiar with,” and when speaking of the animal of focus, “there are few other organisms on the planet” with which scientists have more familiarity (Siddall and Rack). So despite the scientist’s expertise on their species of choice and well understood foundational scientific information, their cognitive dissonance will allow them to ignore the proof of beyond-human intelligence and emotions for the sake of continuing their grave mistreatment of their beyond-human animal subjects.