

A TOM REGAN POTPOURRI

A compendium of quotations from the works of Tom Regan

From *The Case for Animal Rights*, second edition

"[I]n lieu of fair criticism of my philosophical case for animal rights, some people in high places—including some lofty towers of academe—have attacked me rather than addressing my ideas. For example, they have slandered my character by accusing me of inciting others to riot and by implicating me in a variety of crimes, including murder." (p. xv)

"If I have learned anything in the past twenty years, it is that the struggle of animal rights is not for the faint of heart. The pace of social change requires the endurance of the marathoner, not the lightning speed of the sprinter." (p. xiv)

"My belief in the ultimate triumph of justice for animals is no less today than it was [twenty years ago, when I wrote *The Case for Animal Rights*]; if anything, it is stronger. Let's just say my idealism has been tempered by a strong dose of realism." (p. xiv)

"People need to do more than be convinced by a philosophical argument for the rights of animals. In particular, they need to come to terms with what is really happening to animals, something they will never do if they trust what they are told by spokespersons for the major animal abusing industries or government officials." (p. xiv)

"That we are in the habit of doing something, or that we find it convenient to do it, goes no way toward justifying what we do." (pp. 337-338)

"[T]he very notion that farm animals should continue to be viewed as property must be challenged." (p. 348)

"The appeal to tradition—an appeal one finds, for example, in support of fox hunting in Britain—has no more force in the case of hunting than it does in the case of any other customary abuse of animals—or humans." (p. 345)

"[P]rejudices die hard, all the more so when, as in the present case, they are insulated by widespread secular customs and religious beliefs, sustained by large and powerful economic interests, and protected by the common law." (p. 399)

"Might does not make right; might does make law." (p. 399)

"Moral philosophy is no substitute for political action. Still, it can make a contribution. Its currency is ideas, and though it is those who act—those who write letters, circulate petitions, demonstrate, lobby, disrupt a fox hunt, refuse to dissect an animal or use one in 'practice surgery,' or are active in other ways—though these are the ones who make a mark on a day to day basis—history shows that ideas do make a difference." (pp. 399-400)

From *The Struggle for Animal Rights*

"Animals are not our tasters; we are not their kings." (p. 83)

"Fundamental moral wrongs are not alterable by future results. Or past intentions." (p. 106)

"The struggle for animal rights is not for the faint of heart." (p. 107)

"Eternal vigilance is required no less from us, to protect the basic rights of nonhuman animals, than it is required of everyone, if we are to protect the basic rights of human beings." (pp. 108-09)

"Ethical progress is never easy. We would be better at it, if it were." (p. 109)

"The world grows weary of militance and meanness." (p. 111)

"The old adage, 'You can't legislate morality,' may be true. But we are in deep legal and moral trouble if we can't legislate justice."

From *Empty Cages*

"[W]hat happens to us after we die does not help us understand why we have the rights we do while we are alive." (p. 48)

"Great people are not above making great mistakes." (p. 49)

"Morally considered, a genius who can play Chopin etudes with one hand tied behind her back does not have a 'higher' rank than a seriously mentally impaired child who will never know what a piano is or who Chopin was." (p. 51)

"The role of veterinarians in the legitimization of standard practices in the major animal user industries is an unspeakable tragedy, their betrayal is so great" (p. 82)

" [T]here is an incredibly delicious, colorful, and nutritious animal-free cuisine out there to be discovered, a menu of

possibilities that includes foods from every nation and ethnicity in the world. It is the great new food we gain, not the customary old food we lose, that is the real surprise, something all of us have to discover for ourselves. It's not something anyone can teach us.” (p. 88)

“There are wealthy Americans who want to show the world that the difficult economic times haven't affect them . . . With fur [these people are saying, 'Everyone is suffering but I'm not.' Perhaps money would make narcissists of us all.” (p. 112)

“The money someone makes by violating another's rights is never moral reason enough for doing so.” (p. 124)

“If we think lions, tigers, elephants, and dolphins *belong* in circuses and marine parks, how could we possibly see anything wrong when they *perform*? Why else would they be there?” (p. 139)

“The rights of animals should never be violated so that some people can have a good time or because others make a comfortable living from doing so.” (p. 139)

“You don't motivate people to become more compassionate toward animals by showing a lack of compassion toward humans in hard times.” (p. 185)

“Animal Rights Advocates have no reason to be self-righteous, as if the world were divided into the Pure (that would be us) and the Impure (that would be the rest of humanity). Morally, we are all shades of gray.” (p. 186)

“[People] should not be deterred from moving forward on their journey because someone else doesn't understand where they are on theirs.” (p. 187)

“The violence done by Animal Rights Advocates . . . is nothing compared to the violence done by the major animal user industries, a raindrop compared to an ocean.” (p. 189)

“It is the propaganda machines of the major animal user industries that have made *violence* and *animal rights* synonymous in the minds of many people. It is these machines that have been doing (and are continuing to do) a special interest mind job on the American people.” (p. 192)

“[T]he verdicts of history teach that entrenched social practices not only *can* change, they *have* changed. But never without a struggle.” (p. 193)

“Every Animal Rights Advocate has something to contribute to the animal rights movement. And not just any old something. What each person contributes is something special, something needed.” (p. 193)

From *Animal Rights, Human Wrongs*

“Rights involve justice, not generosity; what we are due, not what we want.”
(p. 27)

“To attempt to determine which humans have rights on the basis of race is like trying to sweeten tea by adding salt. What race we are tells us nothing about what rights we have.” (p. 27)

“To act in ways that are respectful of individual rights is to act in ways that are respectful of the individual whose rights they are.” (p. 75)

“The end of sexual satisfaction never justifies the means of sexual coercion.”
(p. 98)

“A prudent morality enjoins us to act on what is true, not on what might be.”
(p. 102)

“We do not need to know everything before we can know something.” (p. 103)

“Asking who has an immortal soul is as logically irrelevant to asking who has rights as asking who has blond hair or missing teeth.” (p. 104)

“Whether our preferences are evil is not something to be decided by determining how strenuously we deny that they are.” (p. 116)

“None of us is so acculturated that we sleep walk through our moral lives.” (p. 117)

From *Defending Animal Rights*

“Depending on one’s perspective, humanity is either on the borders of a new world that promises a harvest of hitherto undreamed of benefits, populated by compassionate Dr. Spocks and Dr. Welbys, or poised on the sharp precipice of our worst nightmares, peopled with the good doctors Frankenstein and Moreau.” (p. 1)

“[W]hat we should do in practice depends on understanding what we ought to do in principle.” (p. 24)

“The true objective for which animal advocates should work . . . is not to provide animals with larger cages but to empty them.” (p. 35)

“[T]he interest of those who profit from animal exploitation should play no role whatsoever in deciding whether to abolish the institution that furthers those interests.” (p. 37)

“The struggle for animal rights . . . calls for a deeper, more fundamental change in the way we think about membership in the moral community. It demands not an expansion but a dismantling of the for-humans-only conception, to be replaced by one that includes other-than-human animals.” (p. 141)

From *The Thee Generation*

“I write of a new generation, The Thee Generation. It is a generation of service: of giving not taking, of commitment to principles not material possessions, of communal compassion not conspicuous consumption. If the defining question of the present generation is What can I get for me? The central question of this new generation is What can I do for thee?” (p. 1)

“One thing is certain. Whatever hope there is for the flourishing of life, within and beyond the human family, requires the demise of those ideas that have brought us here.” (p. 6)

“The ethos of avenging angels is past. Ours is an age when benevolent assassins are asked to bury false ideologies. If philosophers have a future, it is this.” (p. 6)

“So long as we rest content with what we have been taught about right and wrong, we give sad testimony to the fact that our life really does not matter much to us.” (p. 29)

“A human being is not a robot, not a genetically hard-wired stimulus-response machine, not a body lacking a mind and will.” (p. 29)

“Everything we know about human growth—about the flourishing of the human spirit and the actualization of those capacities that make a human life truly worth living—points to the need for each of us to take charge of our life, to nurture our rational autonomy, and to cultivate our capacity to care, not only for ourselves and others but for what is true and just and good.” (p. 29)

“The way one philosopher shows respect for another philosopher is by challenging the other’s ideas, by trying to show (fairly, of course) that these ideas are false, or unsupported, or worse. To do anything else would be . . . well, philosophical bad manners.” (p. 123)

“Most people who read this book, and who still eat meat, will buy the meat they eat at nationally franchised food stores. This meat is therefore the end product of factory farms . . . It’s a matter of economics. Wholesalers and retailers buy as cheap as they can, which means—in the case of meat—at the trough of factory farms.” (pp. 123-124)

“[T]he plain fact is, *billions* of nonhuman animals annually are caused gratuitous pain and suffer an untimely death, all for the sake of culturally conditioned human desires regarding food.” (p. 141)

“In the choice of our food . . . we see, not through a glass darkly, but face-to-face, a small but important part of what must be done. For despite the prodigiousness of our ignorance, we do know this: Christians are what Christians eat.” (p. 157)

From *All That Dwell Therein*

“We can hear, if we will but listen, the muffled detonation of the explosive harpoon, the sharp crack of the Thai hunter’s rifle, the drip of the liquid as it strikes the rabbit’s eye, the bobbie calf’s forlorn sign. We can see, if we will but look, the last convulsive gasps of the great blue whale, the dazed terror of the gibbon’s eyes, the frenzied activity of the rabbit’s feet, the stark immobility of the bobbie calf. Tomorrow, other whales, other rabbits will be made to suffer; tomorrow, other gibbons, other calves will be killed, and others the day after. And others, stretching into the future. All this we know with certainty. All this and more, invaluable more, *will* go on, if we do not act today, as act we must.” (p. 98)

“The truth we must recognize, the truth we must emphasize, is that just as blacks do not exist for whites, or women for men, so animals do not exist for us. They are not part of the generous accommodations supplied by a benevolent deity or an ever-so-thoughtful nature. *They* have a life, and a value, of their own. A morality that fails to incorporate this truth is empty. A legal system that excludes it is blind.” (p. 163)

On the hog industry

“Turning pigs into commodities, the deliberate reduction of them into mere things, characterizes the mindset of the industry. ‘The breeding sow should be thought of, and treated as, a valuable piece of machinery,’” advises a

corporate manager of Wall’s Meat Company, “whose function is to pump out baby pigs like a sausage machine.’ Say what you will, the hog industry if might good at this.” (*Empty Cages*, p. 96).

On “ranched” mink

“[According to Fur Commission USA, mink raised on fur ‘ranches’] are treated ‘humanely,’ meaning with compassion, kindness, and mercy. In fact, they are ‘the best cared-for livestock’ in the world, a

statement that, tragically, just might be true. Compared with veal calves, hogs, and chickens raised in confinement, those lucky mink who spend their waking hours pacing back and forth, jumping up the sides of cages, and rotating their heads are leading a country club existence. May God forgive us.” (*Empty Cages*, p. 110).

On the Canadian seal hunt

“Despite official assurances to the contrary, many seals are skinned while still alive. It would be a relief to learn that this happens rarely, though of course it should not happen at all. The bad news is, it happens a lot. An independent scientific study, conducted in 2001 by a team of veterinarians, concluded that 42 percent of the seals were skinned alive. That works out to approximately 130,000.” (*Empty Cages*, p. 115)

On cat and dog fur

“Beginning in 1987, Americans were outraged when the Humane Society of the United States exposed the international trade in cat and dog fur, especially when they learned that garments in American stores were trimmed or lined with fur from these animals . . . Cats and dogs should not have their fur stolen from them, Americans protested. It’s *their* fur; it *belongs to them, not to us*. Animal Rights Advocates could not agree more. To kill cats and dogs for their fur is both uncivilized and unethical. ARAs could not agree more. It’s just that we think the same is true when the fur is stolen from any animal.” (*Empty Cages*, p. 118)

On lions and tigers trained to perform in circuses

“An opportunity to expand animal consciousness presents itself if we look behind the eyes of wild animals trained to perform in circuses. In the wild,

the home range for lions varies from 8 to 156 square miles; for male tigers, from 8 to 156 square miles (in India) and up to 400 square miles (in Siberia). For the sake of comparison, consider that San Francisco and Boston occupy 47 and 48 square miles, respectively; Chicago, 227; New York City, including all five boroughs, 309 square miles. No sensible person can believe that circuses provide lions and tigers with a caged environment of

‘sufficient space,’ one that offers the animals ‘adequate freedom of movement.’” (*Empty Cages*, p. 127)

On dolphins trained to perform in marine parks

“[When free] dolphins swim up to forty miles a day and can dive to depths of more than a quarter mile. In their natural environment, they live in extended social groups and find their way around in an ever changing, challenging environment via echolocation. (They ‘see’ by hearing). Once in captivity, these animals are confined in concrete tanks (sometimes measuring as little as twenty-four feet long by twenty-four feet wide by six feet deep) or in small sea-cages. There are no pods [family groups] here. Nothing changes in any significant way in this desolate world. No natural challenges are faced. Nothing naturally interesting is found because there is nothing naturally interesting to be found. To speak candidly, it is worst than disingenuous; it is shameful that anyone would stand before us and say, ‘We really and truly care about the welfare of our dolphins,’ animals who have nothing to locate, no family to be with, no place to dive, no miles to swim.” (*Empty Cages*. P. 137)

On sport hunting

“When all the rhetorical dust settles, the real rush for the sport hunter comes from the kill. Any doubt about this, just look through any of the hunting magazines at the local newsstand. The hunters pictured in those pages, displaying their dead wares, smiling from ear to ear, could not be happier. If we asked them to pose with beanbag chairs, it just wouldn’t be the same.” (*Empty Cages*, p. 149)

On calf roping

“[In rodeos] calves can reach speeds up to thirty miles an hour before they are lassoed (‘clotheslined’); often they are jerked over backward and slammed to the ground . . . The faster they are running at the time, the harder they are pulled backward. And the harder they are pulled backward, the more their necks are wrenched and the greater the force with which they hit the ground. Some calves do not do encores. It’s one performance and out . . . So here we have today’s brave cowboy, bending over and tying

up a frightened, dazed, disoriented baby (the animals are all of four or five months old), with neck and back injuries, bruises, broken bones, and internal hemorrhages. Are those who are working to abolish rodeo in general, calf roping in particular, just overwrought, emotionally unbalanced calf huggers?” (*Empty Cages*, p. 152)

On animal experimentation

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A Tom Regan Potpourri

“The scientific rationale behind human vivisection needs little explanation. Using human subjects in research overcomes the difficulty of extrapolating results from another species to our species. As such, human vivisection promises even greater benefits than any that might accrue from animal vivisection. No serious advocate of human rights can support such research. This judgment is not capricious or arbitrary; it is a necessary consequence of the logic of our moral rights . . . ARAs hold the same position when other animals are vivisection’s victims. The end does not justify the means . . .” (*Empty Cages*, p. 177)