

Talking About Animals - Our Advocacy for Better or Worse

A Presentation by Karen Davis, PhD,
President of United Poultry Concerns



*Photo by Frank Johnston,
The Washington Post*

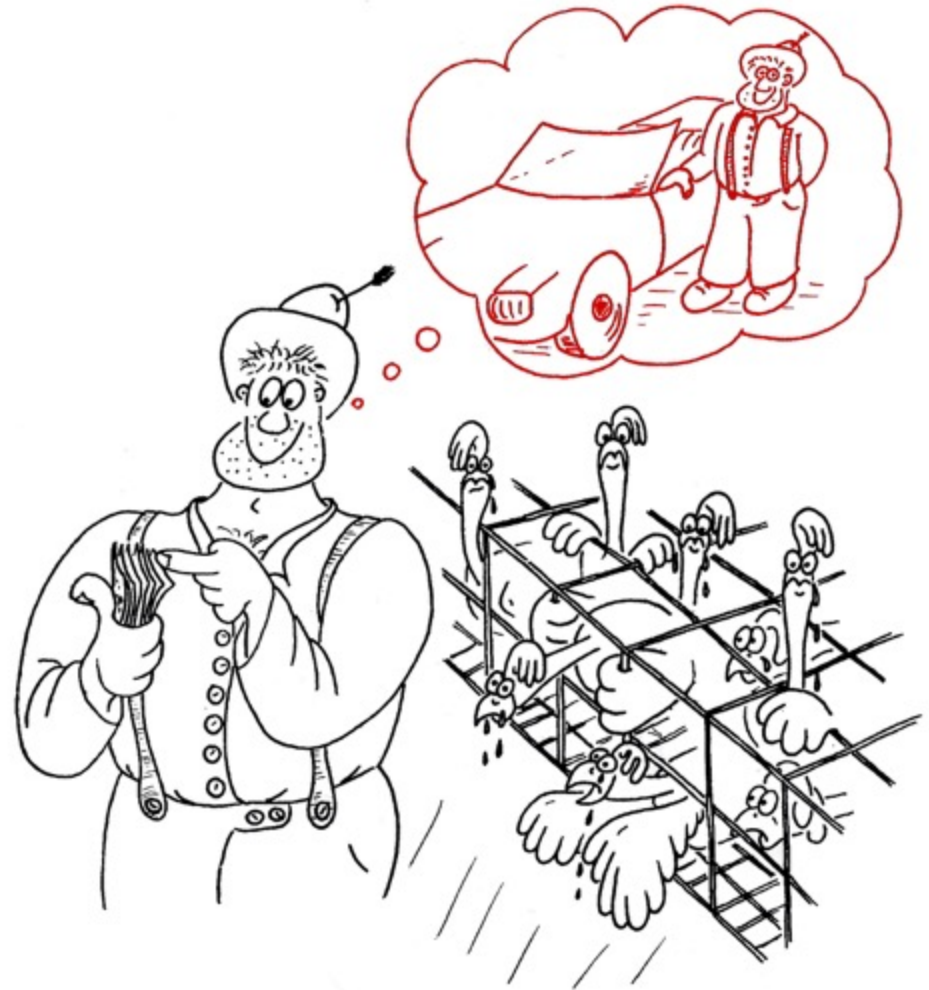
The Rhetoric of Animal Exploitation versus the Rhetoric of Animal Liberation

We are told we are being “emotional” or “anthropomorphic” if we care about a chicken, insist that a turkey has feelings, or grieve over a farmed animal’s plight, By contrast, such “manly” (“science-based”) emotions as pride, conquest, control, and mastery of “poultry” and “livestock” are admired.



*Illustration from Nature's Chicken
by Nigel Burroughs*

***“The farmers
thought all this
was great.”***



*Illustration from Nature's Chicken
by Nigel Burroughs*

Anthropomorphism

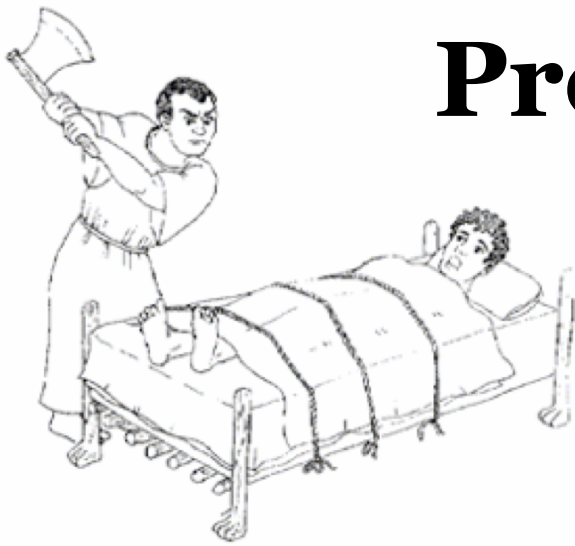
Historically, “anthropomorphism” (“man-shaped”) meant ascribing human characteristics to a deity.

Today, “anthropomorphism” refers almost entirely to the attribution of consciousness, emotions, and other mental states, traditionally regarded as uniquely human, to other animals as well.

Despite overwhelming evidence of the biological and psychological continuity between ourselves and other animals, animal exploiters cry “anthropomorphism” to discredit protest against their inhumane treatment of animals and to enforce the doctrine of an unbridgeable gap between humans and “animals.”

Exceptions to the “unbridgeable gap” are vivisection, the doctrine of “consent to be sacrificed,” and the carnivalesque tradition of human-animal caricature.

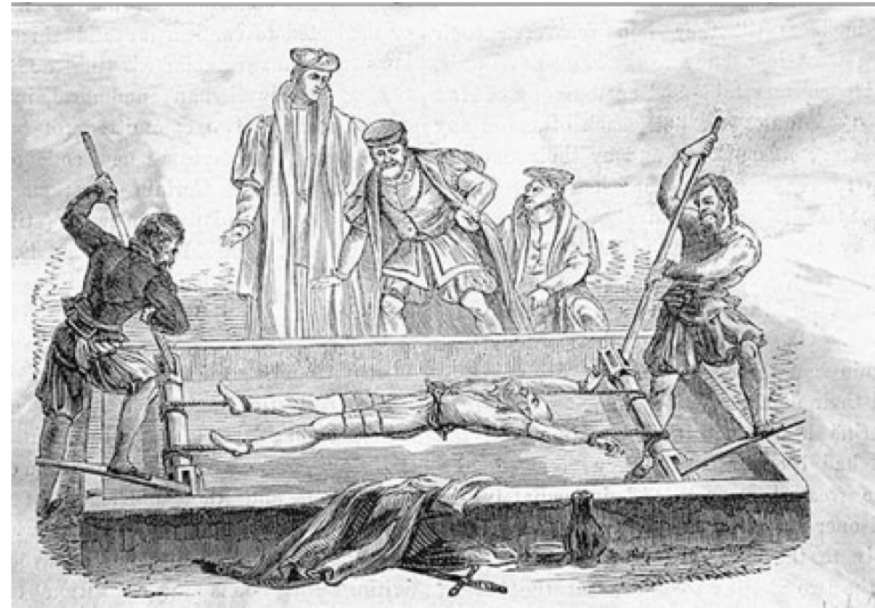
Procrustean Solutions



In Greek mythology, Procrustes (“the stretcher”) is a bandit who keeps an iron bed that he forces people to conform to. If they are too tall, he amputates their limbs; if they are too short, he stretches them.

Procrustes symbolizes the false anthropomorphism used to force nonhuman animals into constructions both physical and rhetorical that are alien and inimical to the animals’ true nature, desires, and needs.

“This is how we use them” is converted to “this is who they are.”



Debeaking: a Procrustean Solution to Dystopian Living Conditions for Birds

“The emotion-laden word ‘mutilation’ is sometimes used in describing removing a portion of a hen’s beak. However, removal of certain bodily structures, although causing temporary pain to individuals, can be of much benefit to the welfare of the group.” –

James V. Craig, *Domestic Animal Behavior*





**Baby Turkeys
on a Laser
Debeaking
Carousel at the
Hatchery.**



“Free-range organic” young turkeys with surgically mutilated beaks at Diestel Turkey Ranch, a supplier to Whole Foods.

Photo by East Bay Animal Advocates



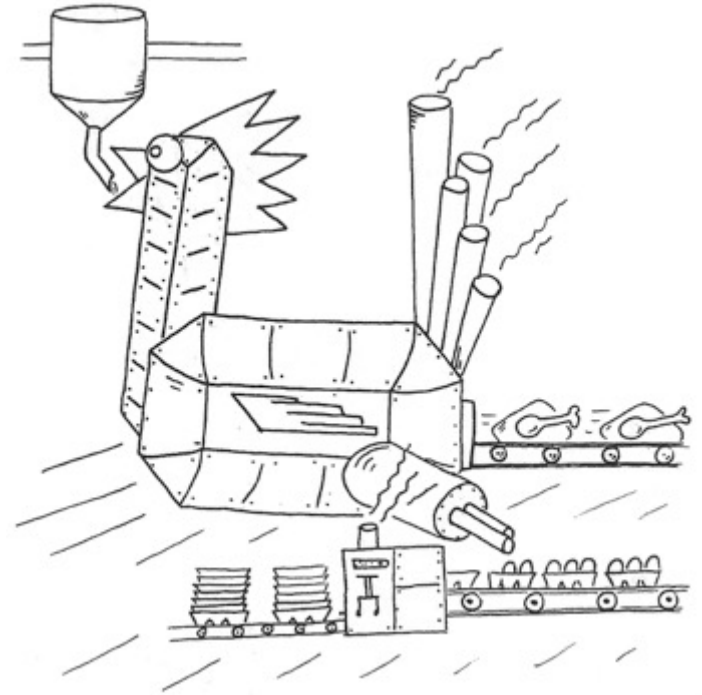
A worker force-feeds a duck to produce a diseased liver “delicacy.” This industry and its “scientists” like to claim that force-feeding an enslaved sedentary duck or goose is no different from geese filling up in preparation for their long-distance flights.

Animal Genocide

Forcing animals – “stretching” and amputating” them like Procrustes, to fit a preconceived human pattern or agenda – is the essence of genocidal assault on nonhuman animal *identity*.

“Genocidal assault” fits the concept of genocide originally formulated by the Polish jurist, Raphael Lemkin, in 1944, referring not only to the deliberate *physical* annihilation of a group by direct killing but also to the destruction of the *identity* of the targeted group or groups – “extinction” by incarceration and/or genetic manipulation, reflected in and reinforced by rhetorical constructs that falsify the targeted group and validate the oppressor.

The “animal” is equated to:
a criminal, a toddler, a
cognitively challenged
human, a machine.



*Illustration from Nature's Chicken
by Nigel Burroughs*

Animal rights scholar Roberta Kalechofsky describes humanity's subjugation of nonhuman animals by observing that the animal is trapped in the "symbolism of another group. The animal's life and destiny are under the control of the symbolic signs of others," as in this formulation:

Farmed animals are "creations of man" making "the complaint of animal liberationists that the 'natural behavior' of chickens and calves is cruelly frustrated on factory farms" as meaningful as "to speak of the natural behavior of tables and chairs." – Environmentalist J. Baird Callicott

Empathic Anthropomorphism vs. False Anthropomorphism

In the rhetoric of exploitation – as opposed to the language of liberation – animals can be redeemed from being “just animals” only by being sacrificed to a “higher” form of life via science, religion, entertainment, or edibility. This is the essence of false anthropomorphism and of the genocidal erasure of the animal’s true identity in favor of the abuser’s image.

Whole Foods: The Lie

Compassionate Carnage & Humane Horror



Whole Foods: The Truth

*“Certified Humane”: Undercover Investigation
by Direct Action Everywhere*



**“Lies, Lies, LIES, I’m so sick of Lies. I get lies all day through, first from them, now from you – Is that all you blighters can do?”
(adapted from Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*)**



Courtesy of Fish Feel



The world’s leading certification program for sustainable fisheries.

Facetious Anthropomorphism

*“Have you ever wondered what a (dead) chicken might look like, dressed up as historical figure?”
Humor Magazine*



**“How the Chicken Conquered the World.”
A chicken. Dressed as Caesar.**

Photo: The Smithsonian

The animal to be sacrificed “is not considered an animal” but “a symbol of those powers for which the sacrificial ritual stands.” – Basant K. Lal in *Animal Sacrifices*

This chicken is a “replacement” for the death deserved by the sinner, according to Kaporos lore.

Photo: Brooklyn, New York



The opposite of false anthropomorphism is empathic anthropomorphism.

Empathic anthropomorphism is the rooting of a person's vicarious perceptions and emotions in the realities of evolutionary kinship with other animal species in a spirit of goodwill. In contrast to the false anthropomorphism of abusers, anthropomorphism based on empathy and careful observation is a valid approach to understanding and relating caringly to the individuals of other species. We are linked to other animals through evolution; communication between ourselves and them is commonplace. Reasonable inferences can be drawn regarding the meaning of an animal's body language and vocal inflections based on what we know about comparable responses in humans in similar contexts.

We share a love for spaghetti!



We share a love for comfort and joy!



Mavis and Me, A Love Story

During this time, we had three adult “broiler” hens - Bella Mae, Alice, and Florence. They were the opposite of Mavis. All I had to do was crouch down in the yard, and here comes one of my Three Graces, as I called them, Bella Mae for example, bumping up against me with her ample breast for an embrace.

Immediately, Alice and Florence would hastily plod over on their heavy feet to participate in the embracement ceremony. Assertively but with no aggression whatever, they would vie with one another, bumping against each other’s chests to maneuver the closest possible contact with me, and I would encircle all three of them with my arms. One day as we were doing this, I looked up and saw Mavis just a few feet away, staring at us. The next time, the same thing happened. There was Mavis with her melancholy eyes watching me hugging the three white hens. And then it struck me - Mavis wants to be hugged. I withdrew from the hens, walked over and knelt beside Mavis and pulled her gently toward me. It didn’t take much. She rested against me in a completeness of comfort that seemed to include her gratitude that her shy desire had been understood.



Karen & Mavis

These hens express the unnatural misery inflicted on them by false anthropomorphism.

Photo by: Mercy for Animals, Weaver Brothers Egg Farm in Versailles, Ohio



**These hens, rescued
from Procrustean
battery cages, express
their natural happiness
in life.**

*UPC Sanctuary hens rescued from battery
cages. Photo by Susan Rayfield*



“Running free after a life in Procrustean cages!”



In Conclusion:

I uphold the Rights of Animals. I believe animals have a moral claim on us as fellow beings with feelings, needs and desires, just like us. A fundamental claim is their right to be justly perceived and accurately represented in our discourse regarding them.

Like us, they have birthrights and earth rights that, instead of trashing, we must learn to respect and protect. The surgical and genetic mutilations that chickens and other animals experience at our hands, the grievous Procrustean wounds we inflict on them, including how we often speak disparagingly about them, even in our own advocacy discourse at times, are wrong. As people committed to fairness and fellowship with our sister and brother earthlings, we must work to right these wrongs. We must stand up for our animal kin with courage and care. We can and we must do this!

“We are Earthlings just like you!”



UPC sanctuary rooster Rhubarb. Photo by Davida G. Breier

**A mother turkey
shelters her poult
safe for the night.**

***What Wings
are For!***



What Can I Do?

International Respect for Chickens Day May 4

“Please do an ACTION for Chickens in May!”

INTERNATIONAL RESPECT FOR CHICKENS DAY, MAY 4 is an annual project launched by United Poultry Concerns in 2005 to celebrate chickens throughout the world and protest the bleakness of their lives in farming operations. The entire month of May is International Respect for Chickens Month!

Please do an ACTION for chickens on or around May 4. Ideas include leafleting on a busy street corner, holding an office party or classroom celebration, writing a letter to the editor, doing a radio call-in, tabling at your local church, school or shopping mall, hosting a vegan open house, or simply talking to family, friends or strangers about the plight – and delight – of chickens and how people can help them.



Ruby & Ivy, photo: Jim Robertson

See our merchandise pages for posters & brochures, also available at www.upc-online.org/merchandise.

What Wings Are For!

Thank you for making every day Respect for Chickens Day!

In memory of our loving turkey Boris.

Photo by Susan Rayfield

*"Don't Gobble Me!"
-- Boris the Turkey*



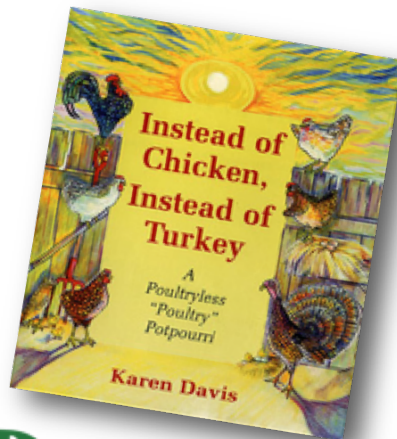
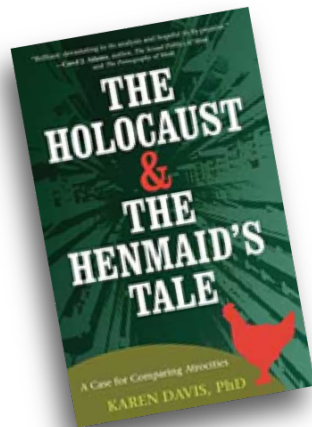
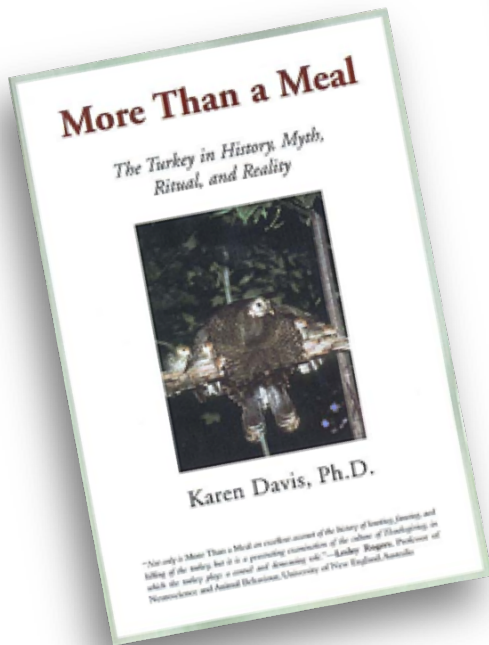
*Turkeys are friends, not food
- go vegan!*

Karen Davis with UPC Sanctuary Chickens

Photo by Frank Johnston, The Washington Post

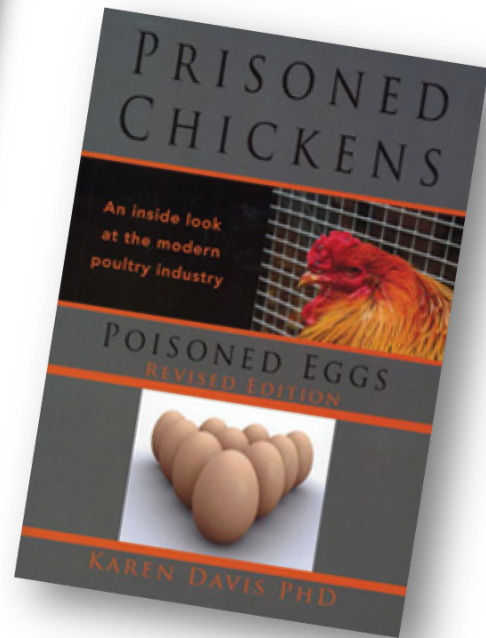


For more information, visit



**United Poultry
Concerns**

www.upc-online.org



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