



YOU ANIMAL!
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When we began “domesticating” animals about 10,000 years ago, we created a division between ourselves and the rest of the natural world and began a reign of human supremacy that continues to this day. In a desperate (and successful) attempt to deny our own animal-ness, we have denigrated and exploited non-human animals for so many centuries that now the most insulting thing you could say to someone is “an animal.”

We, the victors, the authors of this history, depict animals as savage, vicious, and violent and humans as civilized, intelligent, and compassionate. If the animals were the tellers of this tale, it would be an entirely different story. If our worth was measured by how fast we could run, by how adeptly we could climb, by how well we could hear, we would fall quite short when compared to the rest of the animal kingdom.

Despite the high esteem with which we regard our species, in our treatment of others – both human and non-human – we might do well to take some cues from our animal brethren. Though we humans possess many fine qualities, with just a cursory examination of our own history, we may find that it would actually be a compliment to be called “an animal.”

If we knew them at all, we would aspire to attain the grace and dignity of those we have most severely subjugated. We would seek to have the sense of humor of the goats; the protective nature of the hens and the sassiness of the roosters. We would desire the gentle strength of the cattle, the wisdom and serenity of the donkeys. We would appreciate the need for community as do the sheep and choose our companions as carefully as do the rabbits. We would strive to have the commitment to family of the geese, the self-confidence of the cats, the adaptability of the ducks. We would seek to possess the sensitivity of the turkeys, the intelligence, loyalty, and affection of the dogs – and the pigs.

With just a small dose of humility, we might learn from the animals what we need to become better people.

With a Perspective, this is Colleen Patrick-Goudreau