

THE GREAT WHALES is a splendid film produced by National Geographic in which appears footage shot by Greenpeace confronting a Russian whaling boat in pursuit of North Pacific sperm whales. It is by far the most remarkable statement yet made about the mentality of whales and humans.

As the huge whaler closes in on the fleeing pod of sperm whales consisting of one bull in the lead of a tightly packed group of mature females, two Greenpeaceers in an inflatable align themselves between the harpoon boat and the whales. Assuming that the Russians will not risk killing them with a shot, they take their raft right up to the last whales until they are nearly on top of a cow. The sperm whales are porpoising, their fastest mode of travel, indicating that they are much afraid.

The man on the bow behind the gun fires immediately over the heads of the men in the raft. The harpoon disappears into the body of the last cow, explodes and turns the water red with blood. Then the most unexpected thing happens: the bull turns around and swims right by the raft, ignoring it, directly to the whaling boat. He comes full-length straight up out of the water, his jaws open and pointed at the prow. The cannoner shoots an explosive bomb into the massive brain of the sperm whale, apparently killing it instantly.

Are sperm whales merely big fish—a term used to describe the orca by an employee of the National Marine Fisheries Service—controlled by blind instincts, incapable of reasoning or complex problem solving? Could anyone doubt that the bull sperm whale knew precisely what he was doing? That it was the big ship behind him, not the closet, motored craft, which fired a deadly weapon at one of his herd. That the enemy was not the closest human or human craft nor the hull of the whaler but none other than the man behind the cannon high above the water, a man and gun that by all appearances the bull could not possibly have observed until after the harpoon was fired.

It has been said the amount of reason in a human being can be measured in an eye dropper. How else are we to explain the fact that our scientists and moral philosophers devote endless rhetoric to the question of whether or not whales experience pain when bombs explode in their bodies? As recently as 1980, the fate of the world's whales was placed in such a context at the International Whaling Commissions Conference On the Intelligence of Cetaceans and the Ethics of Killing Them (my emphasis).

Whether in terms of science or common sense it would seem that things have changed little in the unlovely human mind over 300 years. As the Age of Reason overtook Europe, experimentation in physiology became popular and animals including dogs were nailed to laboratory walls and dissected. As the animal cried out, squeamish students were assured that it felt no pain, that what appeared to be painful was simply the consequence of a mechanism like the spring in a clock being manipulated.

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Cartesianism would have us believe that our human egos are the only undeniable reality in the world, and that all nonhumans are but blind machines incapable of feeling or wrong, for now at least I am convinced that I have experienced immediately and directly another being's pain. Now it is risky, of course, to say such things in print because "scientists" are not supposed to ever disagree too much with prevailing views, but, for whatever it is worth I offer as my defense the words of Albert Einstein that we owe it to ourselves and everyone else to always say exactly what it is we believe.

I was sitting in plane geometry class at the high school when suddenly I yelled and grabbed my foot which felt like it was burning. The arch of my left foot hurt terribly and all I could do was sit and hold it, bear the pain and sweat. After several minutes, about five, the

sharp pain and burning sensation subsided and class returned to normal. After class let out I was walking down the hallway when Marsha Whitten stopped to ask if I were going to the hospital...my brother had shot himself in the arch of the left foot with my shotgun at about 10:40 AM, the time when I yelled and grabbed my left foot. At the hospital he described the sensation of the blast without knowing what I had experienced in class; he said, "It felt like my foot was on fire"... the same adjective I'd used.

Being thoroughly trained—which really means indoctrinated—in behavioral science, I know well the ready questions and criticisms. And though I could respond by pointing out that never before or since have I had such a sensation anywhere in my body (nor has my brother so traumatized himself before or since), and though my brother and I could agree to polygraphic analysis or hypnotism to verify our claims, nothing we could say or do would qualify as sufficient evidence for the mechanist. The best assessment would be "mere coincidence." There is nothing "mere" to any coincidence, since co-incidental phenomena in an interdependent, ordered universe are precisely what makes science possible; however, science prefers to adhere to its self-serving myths. It is sad that non-physicists among scientists are not more aware of what the new physics means for science and humanity, and the biologists seem most conservative in this regard. Many individuals including great figures in the history of science have claimed experiences comparable to my own which defy mechanistic explanation, and dismissing them as mere coincidence is as absurd as Cartesianism itself that science does not permit a method by which such experiences may be empirically verified is no valid excuse for ignoring them, and to continue doing so for much longer will mean either that science must evolve or it will become widely recognized as valid only within its self-proclaimed province, which will be seen as a shrinking segment of reality...the times, as they say, are changing.

Besides, there is a huge body of scientifically impressive data in support of the theory that we humans possess faculties that would allow inter-individual communication of subjective experiences. The data pertaining to animal-human psychic communication are also compelling; for now the mainstream of science finds it simply more convenient to ignore them for the sake of upholding the false security of its world view. Which, try as we may to deny it, is what retards human progress on every front. We are in desperate need of a new philosophy, one with courage.

The Cartesian paradigm is responsible for much of our pain and suffering, and that pain and suffering further reinforces our belief in Cartesianism, a vicious circle of egoism. We delude ourselves into believing that we are separate from the world, alone, in the hope that this will protect us from the world when, in fact, all it does is establish psychic barriers which cut us off from one another and other creatures, leaving us in the position of resisting not only pain and suffering— which creates far more of it, but increasing alienation and its ills: stress, conflict, war, materialism, greed, and everything that terribly besets us in the social and ecological realms.

Perhaps this regrettable, self-reinforcing pattern of self and world destruction is simply the consequence of humans finding themselves living in mass society, which, in terms of human needs may as well be termed non-society. We are removed from the interdependent life of true societies in which every one is well known, the rules of conduct are clear or spontaneously corrective, a life which, essentially, provides genuine social security by placing individuals in authentic relationships to one another and society as a whole. True social life encourages individuality because each individual has transpersonal significance. Individualism inevitably is defined socially.

True societies exist as far as I know only in primal situations where humans depend on one another and they are fully conscious of their dependence on nature. For

the primal human, life is defined by his dependence on spirit, the group and on the environment, and where ego is interdependent with the world, rampant egoism is impossible; life is necessarily transcendent. Communication with spirit, other humans and with nature and her creatures and forces is the basic assumption. The shaman communicates with animals. and mistreatment of deer could bring havoc upon an individual from deer/nature

Spirits.

Sharp contrast with our life. We worship, praise and emphasize individualism, ego-consciousness, "aggressiveness," competition, status and wealth, everything we don't need and which accounts for our head-long rush to destruction. Is it any wonder we can't talk to the animals? That our scientists sit in pretentious composure cautiously adhering to the Law of the Accepted, debating issues like Do Sperm Whales Feel Pain When Bombs Explode in Their Bodies? That in the name of "humane" treatment thousands of human lives are devoted to killing fifty million cats and dogs annually? That educated America argues that the Soviets are out to get us so we'd better keep building more nuclear weapons—after all, some insist, a nuclear war is survivable? That so-called Christians would rather strike first than turn the cheek? That a brush war in God only knows where gathers more attention than loss of ozone?

The question of how we treat animals is no different than how we treat other humans or ourselves. All speak to one thing, our self-imposed resistance to life itself. For any of this to change we must first begin to face life head on, to accept what hurts along with what doesn't, admitting that our resistance causes enormous pain, suffering and misery. Attention and self-knowledge is the path out. Then we might discover that pain is not quite as painful as we imagined, that we may experience pain and be better for it, that life is not ego and self-defensiveness, but ego and the world in mutually interdependent

transcendence, that such awareness constitutes freedom, and from it we become more loving, more intelligent, more human, and better able to meet the problems of this world in a healthy, positive light.

As long as humanity lives in fear it will incur fearful consequences: self-fulfilling prophesy. Fear exists in the hearts of men, almost all of it imaginary and invalid, and so it is awareness of the source of fear as the cause of our pain which may lead us home. Nothing else will do.

The revolution in the way we perceive and relate to animals represents nothing less than a philosophical transmutation from idealism or egoism to co-existence or transcendentalism. When one discovers in the quietude of a peaceful heart that neither he nor anything else is strictly mechanical, but that everything in the universe is truly alive, even in death, then fear, ego and self give way to love and Infinite Being, in whose body we live with the orcas, sperm whales, aphids and planets. Life, all of it is a Great Mystery. Awareness of the fact of living brings down the veils of illusion and initiates us into another kingdom, literally the Kingdom of Heaven. Fear is, it exists, but whether it rules our life is a question of commitment to awareness of it. Fear, too, is sacred, and here is a great secret— in loving our fear and pain we also transcend ourselves.

Then the magic begins.

