



The who in me:
Meat, a subject of ambiguity

Description

Most humans have the option of choice and this includes our diets

By **Georges R. Dupras**

Recently I was reading a book by a respected American author and poet, in which she speaks of her love for Nature and how it enriched her life.

In one segment she writes that she eats almost no meat, yet she craves it and finds it “an interesting subject of deep ambiguity”. She goes on to say that she is devoted to Nature but feels that “to consider Nature without this appetite – is to look with shut eyes upon the miraculous interchange that makes things work, that causes one thing to nurture another, that creates the future out of the past”.

There is no doubt that when referring to the “miraculous interchange”, she is referring to a subsistence existence. This applies to non-human animals but certainly not when you include “man” into the mix. Our “more is better” lifestyles and constant pursuit for economic growth go well beyond the “interchange” she describes so eloquently. She goes on to write that in her personal life, she is burdened with anxiety and often stricken with a wish to be beyond all that.

Dust in the wind

A wish fades into the mists of time unless the individual expressing it is willing to act, and this begins by changing themselves. There are at least two obvious differences that separate humans from non-humans. The first is that most humans have the option of choice, and this includes our diets. The second is that humans like to believe that we are the only “ethical”, species on this planet. Beyond self-awareness, a trait not necessarily exclusive to man, there are other traits that define us, but we will leave those for another time.

We can choose a plant-based diet that is coherent with a healthy and vibrant environment or, we can choose a meat diet based on generations of habit and conditioning.



The option of choice

We have a choice, one that can help relieve us of the anxiety that burdened the poet. We can choose a plant-based diet that is coherent with a healthy and vibrant environment or, we can choose a meat diet based on generations of habit and conditioning. The latter destroys the very habitats the author speaks about so caringly, and that many believe is the cause of climate disruption. We are warned that meat-based agriculture plays a predominant role in our ever-increasing loss of species. Science projects a loss of a million or more species within a few decades. Of equal importance is that a meat diet, as well as non-subsistence hunting, de-sensitizes and conditions us to believe that some species are of less value than others.

To justify our present meat-based diet by comparing it to prey predator inter-actions, and what amounts to a subsistence existence in nature, is unfathomable. Man simply does not fit that format.

I too have a deep respect for the natural world and appreciate carnivores, herbivores and even maggots for what they are, and for the roles evolution has dictated for them – they have no choice. I can also see man's reflection on our natural and social environments, and if that image was a word, it would surely be:

S-H-A-M-E

The “who” in “me”

Make no mistake, I'm not critical of the poet, I admire her for her talent, as well as for her anxiety. Those who are free of such internal conflict are lacking in empathy. Regrettably the author of the book I've been reading passed away on January 17, 2019, and though we never met, I feel a kinship.

'To justify our present meat-based diet by comparing it to prey predator inter-actions, and what amounts to a subsistence existence in nature, is unfathomable. Man simply does not fit that format.'

As for me, I am still searching, learning and hopefully sharing. I am overflowing with uncertainty and with contradiction, yet still I steer the course. I look to those, wiser in years and I draw from their life's experiences.

Changing nature (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy)

It was not so many years ago that factions within the meat industry in the UK tried to convert herbivores (cows) to a mutton-based diet, which resulted in Mad Cow Disease. The result should have convinced us to rethink our present agricultural practices. In this instance, rather than change our methods to meet growing world demands, we tried to change nature.

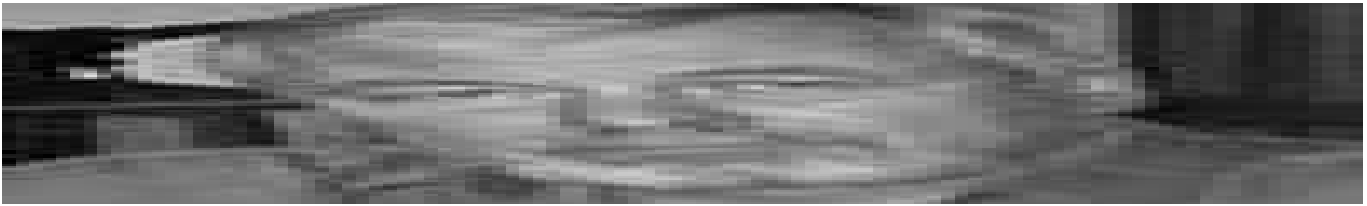
If we truly want things to change, we must first change ourselves.

Feature image: Trinity Kubassek from Pexels

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Georges R. Dupras has advocated for animals for over fifty years. A member of the International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA), a Director of the Animal Alliance of Canada (AAC), Quebec Representative of Zoocheck Canada and past Board member of the Canadian SPCA, he worked on the original Save the Seal campaign in 1966 that culminated in the founding of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in 1969. Georges Dupras has published two books, *Values in Conflict* and the eBook *Ethics, a Human Condition*, and currently lives in Montreal, Canada.



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