Animal Acts
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SLIDE of an Indian miniature representing an elephant whose body is made up of countless animals.

SLIDE off. A tight SPOT picks up a mechanical toy dog walking toward down-stage, periodically sitting and barking. Two MEN in ninja costumes keep the dog from straying from a straight line by pushing him with TV antennas.

ROSENTHAL’s voice: A poor woodcutter lived with his wife and three daughters in a little hut on the edge of the forest. One morning as he was about to go to work, he said to his wife: “Let our eldest daughter bring my dinner in the forest or I shall never get my work done.” The girl set out on her way with a bowl of soup when the sun was just above the center of the forest.
But she lost her way and, when night fell, was much afraid. Through the darkness she saw a light glimmering between the trees. It was a hut. In the little hut was an old gray-haired man with a long white beard, a cock, a hen, and a brindled cow. The girl asked for shelter and the old man said: “Cook us our supper.” The girl cooked a good meal, ate her fill, but had no thought of the animals. When she was through she said: “Now I am tired. Where is there a bed where I can lie down and sleep?” The animals replied: “Thou hast eaten with him, thou hast drunk with him, thou hast no thought of us. So find out for thyself where thou canst pass the night!” The man opened a trap door and thrust the girl in the cellar.

The mechanical dog falls down into the orchestra pit and out of sight. The MEN look into the pit, at each other, then at the audience. They fold and pocket the TV antennas.

SLIDE: Descartes lived from 1596 to 1650. He saw animals as “thoughtless brutes” without consciousness. Here is what a contemporary of Descartes wrote of his practices: “The scientist administered beatings to dogs with perfect indifference and made fun of those who pitied the creatures as if they felt pain. He said the animals were clocks; that the cries they emitted when struck were only the noise of little springs that had been touched, but that the whole body was without feeling. They nailed the poor animals up on boards by their four paws to vivisect them, to see the circulation of the blood, which was a great subject of controversy.

Light on the orchestra pit as it rises. The MEN stand at attention, and ROSENTHAL is discovered standing on the pit as it rises to stage level. She is carrying the mechanical dog, cradling it in her arms. She seems asleep. She is wearing a long red robe and black jogging shoes. The CAMERAMAN rises in the pit with her and goes upstage. During the following speech, ROSENTHAL is like a somnambulist, and the MEN manipulate her.

The HORSE enters upstage and is filmed and projected on the screen. The MEN interject words (capitalized and in parenthesis) expressionlessly throughout ROSENTHAL’s speech.

There are always animals in my dreams (GROWL). They are usually in jeopardy or they threaten me (ARF). I dream of stags on fire, kittens abandoned and starving in a hotel room, of rhinos charging me in a bog (HONK). Once I dreamed my mother drowned my pet rat (SQUEAK). Before I fully wake, in the moments preceding my roping in the scattered fragments of my continuity (CLUCK), I experience the thrilling and troubling sensation of having both entered a forbidden zone (OINK), atavistic and archaic (BOW-WOW), reaching back into the biological time pool, and also of having plunged into cellularity within the dark and teeming busyness of my viscera (RIBBETT) and of communing with my own flesh (MOO). In my animal dreams eter-
nity and the now are merged (TWEET). My sleeping mind dredges up images, red in tooth and claw (HOOT), to which my entire self responds with a gamut of subtly refined emotional particularities (NEIGH). White stallions program my sexuality (CHIRP), the shadow of giant wings activates a gasping fear of death (HISS), the eyes of a big cat make me weep with an aching sense of loss (MEOW). They are there (HEEHAW). They are present (BUZZ). They are the eternal fauna of our psyche and they will not go away (HUM). Perhaps this is their revenge (COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO).

The HORSE exits.

ROSENTHAL turns. The MEN take the mechanical dog away from her and throw it down over her head. She walks upstage and onto a platform. The MEN follow. They face the audience in a row. A number of fish hooks on fish lines are hanging before the MEN. ROSENTHAL takes red paper hearts out of her decolletage during the next speech. With each line, she brings out a heart and hands it to one of the MEN, and they attach it to a fish hook.

I have a baboon heart
I have a chimpanzee heart
And I have a capuchin monkey heart
And even a gorilla heart
But I also have a dog heart
A cat heart
And a whale heart
And would you believe for one so big that I have a rat heart too?
I could go on for I have a million hearts and they all bleed
I am what they call a “bleeding heart humaniac,” aka “little old lady in tennis shoes.”
Funny that the Heart Chakra should be held in such low esteem
But the image is apt for it encompasses sexism, ageism, and speciesism.

The screen shows a closeup of the hearts. When they are all hooked, ROSENTHAL comes downstage, turns to look at them with her back to the audience, and follows them with her gaze as they fly up.

SLIDE: The laboratory dog with a steel contraption to keep its jaws open. ROSENTHAL sees the slide and bolts. One of the MEN grabs her near the left-stage exit and drags her down, holding one hand over her mouth. A woman enters with a DOG. ROSENTHAL wrests herself out of the MAN’s hold and anxiously follows the woman, telling her the following. They pay no attention to her whatsoever.

I remember in the sixties, seeing a woman strolling with a child. Thirty
paces behind them was a dog, old, mangy, and frightened. He walked in the middle of the street, anxiously watching the woman, and not advancing too fast so as to keep the thirty paces between them. I stopped her and asked if that was her dog. She said, “No, it’s my husband’s dog.” I said, “He’s scared. Why don’t you call him?” She called half-heartedly and the dog crept up, gratefully. I said, “Why do you treat him like this?” She said, “Who cares? He’s going to die soon anyway.” I blurted out my outrage. Then she said, “Why do you care? It’s not your dog!” How many times have I heard this? “It’s not your dog. It’s not your cat. It’s not your elephant.” For I often interfere . . .

ROSENTHAL is stopped short by the MEN yanking up a long rope that was lying downstage parallel to the audience. It hits her under the chin, and she grabs it with both hands as it is pulled across her neck.

SLIDE: The Korean strangled dog.

MEN: Dogs in Korea are slowly strangled because gourmets believe this improves the texture of the meat.

VIDEO of a walking dog, as the woman continues her stroll around the stage.

Help! Help! I can’t speak! I can’t scream! I don’t defend myself. I can’t even tell I’m being attacked. I am overcivilized. I don’t bite. The bite has been bred out of me. I am emasculated. I am tongue-castrated. I am polite. I am courteous. I am considerate. And I want to kill!

The woman with the DOG turns around at the last words, looks at ROSENTHAL, and runs out quickly, pulling her dog behind her. The rope drops to the floor.

A number of people enter with their DOGS. They stand on the right platform, lined up and watching ROSENTHAL like a jury. She takes a couple of steps to the left, looking after the woman and DOG offstage, returns dejected, and sits on the left platform. One of the MEN sneaks up behind her as she speaks, holding a gag. The other one pulls the rope up slowly and coils it around his arm.

I couldn’t reach that woman. I couldn’t find the words. She left. And her heart was unchanged. I was not able to move her or improve the lot of that dog. I was so ashamed that for years I couldn’t talk about the incident.

The MAN suddenly puts the gag between ROSENTHAL’s teeth. She struggles. He keeps her pinned down.

SLIDE: Hexagram: “BITING THROUGH—SHIN—HO.”

VOICEOVER: This hexagram represents an open mouth with an obstruction between the teeth. As a result the teeth cannot meet. To bring them together one must bite energetically through the obstacle.

ROSENTHAL breaks away and runs downstage.
MEN: The Judgment: Biting Through has success. It is favorable to let justice be administered.

ROSENTHAL addresses the DOG PEOPLE, as if pleading her cause:

ROSENTHAL: I never spoke the pain. I didn’t cry. I was a well-brought-up little girl.

SLIDE: An experimental CAT in a steel contraption.

The MEN grab ROSENTHAL, who is facing upstage. They are facing downstage.

MEN: René Descartes denied all thought, by which he meant all consciousness to animals.

The MEN drag ROSENTHAL downstage right, and she screams as they do:

ROSENTHAL: First they burn their feet and break their noses. Then they teach them the tricks that make the circus rich . . .

The MEN push ROSENTHAL onto the orchestra pit and it begins to descend. She seems to be sinking into quicksand. They hold her down with arms outstretched.

MEN:

1. Only man is rational.
2. Only man possesses language.
3. Only men are objects of moral concern.

ROSENTHAL sinks slowly down with the orchestra pit. The DOG PEOPLE come down the platform to the edge of the pit, watching her scream and sink. Other DOG PEOPLE have entered and join them.

I scream for broken spirit
I scream for isolation unto madness
I scream for the paw caught in the jaw that only death can loosen
I scream for the jail barely larger than the body
I scream for the hissing skin under the brand
I scream for the eye that burns but cannot close
I scream for daily torture with no respite and no hope
I scream for my own terror, my own madness, my own obscene silence that make me accomplice to the deed

SLIDES illustrate all the above, i.e., lab animals, farm animals, animals caught in the steel-jaw trap, cattle being branded, the eyes of rabbits after the Draize test, etc.
The pit is lowered so that only ROSENTHAL’s head protrudes.

ROSENTHAL: Oh, Goddess! Help me! How long in a life? How many repeated karmas before I can defend myself when I’m attacked?

The DOG PEOPLE exit.

The I Ching says: “The only way to strengthen the law is to make it clear and to make the penalties certain and swift.”

The pit lowers all the way, ROSENTHAL’s outstretched hands are the last part of her visible.

SLIDE and VOICEOVER: “The very beginning of Genesis tells us that God created man in order to give him dominion over fish and fowl and all creatures. Of course Genesis was written by a man, not a horse. There is no certainty that God actually did grant man dominion over other creatures. What seems more likely, in fact, is that man invented God to sanctify the dominion that he had usurped over the cow and the horse.”

Milan Kundera

The pit rises again. On it lie a patio umbrella, a garbage pail, and a beach blanket. Also the prone mechanical dog. The MEN set up the umbrella and unfold and lay down the blanket as for a picnic. They sit down. One MAN drinks a beer, and the other methodically opens the toy dog, removes the batteries, and tosses the dog in the garbage pail. The dog yips before the batteries are removed. The impression is one of a crude vivisection. The MAN inspects the batteries and tosses them in the pail also.

The TURKEY enters. ROSENTHAL enters upstage and walks drunkenly down on the left platform. She is wearing a red top with a bib of different fake furs, black pants, high heels, and a wig. She carries a champagne glass.

MUSIC: Stripper rhythm.

During the next passage, the MEN toot little horns every time ROSENTHAL toots an animal expression. At the same time, SLIDES of these animals in art history are projected, coinciding with each word.

I was content to let sleeping dogs (toot) lie. But along came this cocksman (toot). He was a wolf (toot) in sheep’s (toot) clothing. He seemed real loony (toot) about me, and for a while we were lovebirds (toot) and had a whale (toot) of a time. He was a tiger (toot). Woke up my pussy (toot), and although he looked like a fat pig (toot), I lost weight and no longer felt like an old cow (toot). I was proud.as a peacock (toot) and looked so foxy (toot) that I turned into a regular clotheshorse (toot)! He swore this was the real thing and that he wasn’t monkeying (toot) around. I was happy as a lark (toot). But the skunk (toot) was lying. That yellow-bellied sonafabitchin’ (toot) rat (toot) dumped me because he wasn’t interested in passion! That
snake (toot) in the grass had been bull-(toot)shitting me all along. I had to go off sex cold-turkey (toot), and he weaseled (toot) out of any explanation. I could have shot the ass-(toot)hole! I'm not usually so catty (toot), but that man behaved like a beast (toot)! Still, I was chicken (toot). I didn't kick his ass (toot) in. He was a sitting duck (toot), and I could have made mincemeat (toot) out of him. But no. I was sweet as a lamb (toot)! God, I'm pissed! I don't give a hoot (toot) about you now, you big baboon (toot)! There's plenty of other fish (toot) in the sea! But I can't forgive myself. What am I, man or mouse (toot)? So I decided love was for the birds (toot) and put the weight back on. It was just pearls (toot) before swine (toot) anyway. However, I got the lion's (toot) share of crap dumped on me, so I'm playing possum (toot). You know why? Because IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE!!! (long toot).

ROSENTHAL downs the champagne, walks shakily upstage on the platform, and exits. The TURKEY exits too. Five CHILDREN and their PETS (two DOGS, a CAT, a HAMSTER, a RABBIT) run in and greet each other. They sit on the blanket and start to talk, laugh, and play with their PETS.

VOICEOVER and live MUSIC: The woodcutter returned home and reproached his wife for leading him to hunger all day. “It is not my fault,” she replied. “The girl went out with your dinner and must have got lost because she didn't return.” So next day the woodcutter requested that his second daughter bring him his supper. Just like the first, the second girl lost her way, came to the hut, and was asked by the white-bearded man to cook supper for them. She too didn't concern herself with the animals. They said: “Thou hast eaten with him, thou hast drunk with him, thou hast no thought of us. So find out for yourself where thou canst pass the night.” And the old man pushed her also down the cellar.

ROSENTHAL has taken off her wig and put down the glass. She enters, comes forward, and addresses the audience. The CHILDREN continue their talk and pay no attention to her.

VIDEO of the PETS, with SLIDES superimposed on the moving images. These SLIDES are timed to appear at regular intervals during ROSENTHAL's next speech. They are:

Seventy to one hundred million animals killed yearly for science in the U.S.
Four to five billion animals killed yearly for food in the U.S.
Four hundred million animals killed yearly for fur worldwide
About fifty million dogs killed yearly in pounds in the U.S. and almost as many cats
Thirty percent of all species on Earth could become extinct in the next decade
What brings a thing into the moral arena? Surely the question of the moral status of nonhuman beings, of whether animals are direct objects of moral concern, is at least a legitimate subject of inquiry. Why do so many people ignore the question? Perhaps because of a sense of guilt mixed with fear of where the argument may lead. If animals are no longer invisible and inaudible, if they come under moral scrutiny, then we can no longer remain blind to the fact that we are living in the midst of a holocaust far exceeding anything the Nazis or any other society ever perpetrated on human beings. Furthermore we cannot plead “not guilty,” because our tax dollars and our consumer dollars support this. If animals are brought under the umbrella of moral concern and deliberation, the comfortable sense of right and wrong that securely governs our everyday existence is no longer tenable, and we cannot eat, sleep, and work in the same untroubled way. In addition, two areas of our being that we are particularly attached to would be radically altered: our stomachs and our pocketbooks.

ROSENTHAL sits among the CHILDREN. They continue to ignore her. MUSIC is childlike.

You know, when I was ten, I forced my little nephew, who was then six, to jump from a small height although he was scared to, by whipping his bare legs with twigs. I can still hear the whistling of the canes in the air, and the satisfying “zing!” when they made contact with the flesh. My nephew went bawling to my mother and I felt bad. But to my surprise and uneasiness, I realized then and there that my heart melted with love for him because I had made him cry.

The MEN eye each other, then come and remove ROSENTHAL gently but firmly from the circle of the CHILDREN.

Much later, in the sixties, Sir Guy the Dog entered our lives. He was a top dog and did only as he pleased. After he stayed away three days and nights having a good time, I was so angry that I beat him. Again I felt the same surge of love after I had made him cry.

Sadistic acts are banal and commonplace.

The orchestra pit descends with all the CHILDREN and their PETS. ROSENTHAL plays the next sequence gradually changing character, becoming more coarse, vulgar, and redneck as the speech unfolds. Closeups of the ANIMALS are projected on the screen.

BROWNIE the RAT enters.

I am not a sadist—but . . . I’m human, aren’t I?

And it’s human to be curious—

to try and find out how things work, how things react, what is the effect to my cause . . .

What if I pinch the rat’s tail? Will it squeak?
ROSENTHAL pinches BROWNIE’s tail.
What if I pinch a little harder?
The person with BROWNIE the RAT moves away and gives ROSENTHAL a dirty look.

I’m only curious. I’m not a sadist . . . And what if I set up a little challenge, a puzzle, something a wee bit stressful for the rat, just to see how it responds?
I’m just a curious human, and it’s my nature to learn, to gain knowledge.
Besides, who’s to stop me? The rat? Haw-haw. He’s little, I’m big.
I can do what I like.
So I starve it a little. Electrocute it too . . .
It’s for a good cause. It’s for Science!
And what? It’s only a rat!

Enter a person with two DOVES.
I like bird song. And it’s my right to cage the bird to hear it sing for me—the one who survives the trip across the border stuffed in car upholstery or a spare tire . . . Yes, I know it’s against the law. But who’ll know?

Enter a person with three MONKEYS.
And look: how will I ever get to see a wild animal? I can’t afford to go to Africa on one of those expensive safaris . . .
So I’m glad they shoot the mother (and sometimes the entire family), capture and import the baby, and stick it in a cage in a zoo for the rest of its life so I can gape at it on Sundays.

Enter three persons, each with a SQUIRREL.
Hey, it’s getting crowded here . . .
I’ve got to get away from all this.
Yeah. I’ll get some land somewhere, where there’s no one around, chop the trees, bulldoze up a nice patch, build a house . . .
What’s that? Who’s living there? Wildlife? Gimme a break! That’s MY land!
And don’t tell ME I can’t shoot them! I have a gun and you’ll get it over my dead body!

Christ no, I’m no sadist. I’m just a sportsman. I love the outdoors.
I love killing animals. Hell, that’s the only excitement left these days . . .
So I’m not a hot shot and sometimes they get away with a rifle wound . . .
Well, better luck next time!

The PYGMY GOAT enters.
Hey, now WHOA!
Don’t tell ME I have to give up meat!
You say it takes twenty-one pounds of vegetable protein to produce one pound of meat to feed me? SO WHAT?
And if we reduced our meat eating by 10 percent a year it would free enough grain to feed eighty million starving people?

Yeah?

Well . . . some people like eating rice.

I like steak.


Are you kidding? A meal without meat? Whaddaya think this is? The Third World?

Come ON! I can't give up that taste!

Just because they give up their lives?

Well, God said it's okay, didn't he?

The RABBIT enters.

Okay. NOW you've gone too far.

I NEED that fur coat.

It's warm in southern California?

Of COURSE it's warm, you yoyo.

That's not what a fur coat is ABOUT!

Don't tell me about traps and gangrene and animals gnawing their paws off . . .

I don't want to hear that shit.

I LOVE fur.

And makeup.

Yeah. I heard about the Draize test—rabbits in stocks with their eyes burned out.

So, that's why we breed them, isn't it?

Why, if we didn't breed them they wouldn't even be alive!

That gives us some right. Right?

PEOPLE with their ANIMALS have been walking through the set.

Uh-uh.

Now you're really making me mad.

You're saying you want ALL animal industries abolished?

But that's UN-AMERICAN!

You're fucking with my livelihood, my business! I have a stake in this.

Finding alternatives to animal testing COSTS MONEY!

Yes. I know animal tests aren't accurate . . .

Please don't remind me about the thalidomide fiasco. All that good re-search and then whammo! . . .

But that's not the point.

We've got a big investment here.

What about my multimillion-dollar sales of cages to labs, to poultry growers, to the pounds?
And hell, my stocks in antibiotics?
Half of it goes to food animals, y’know. I’d be ruined!
What are you anyway, a COMMIE?
I’m not a sadist, for chrissakes! I’m not a bad person!
I’ve got mouths to feed. It’s nature. It’s the way things are!
They’re animals, don’t you see? What do you mean, So what?
So I’m human, that’s what, and they’re not!
Yeah. You got it.
Justice, rights, respect? What the fuck is this, some kind of animal lib?
First it’s the blacks, then it’s the broads, now it’s the brutes?
Look. DON’T COME NEAR ME OR I’LL SHOOT!
No. I’m not a sadist. But YOU are!
I’m an American and I’ve got my rights!
It’s a fucking free country, isn’t it?
ROSENTHAL returns to being herself. The ANIMALS exit. ROSENTHAL looks down into the pit.
The sewers of the human psyche are clogged with the corpses of children, animals, women, animals, slaves, animals, prisoners, animals, animals, animals... The orchestra pit rises with a surgical table covered with a sheet, a stool, and a garbage pail. On the table are a number of small toys, objects, and instruments. ROSENTHAL sits on the stool at the table and, during the next sequence, manipulates the objects as she speaks. The MEN stand one on each side of her. The MAN on her left places a different color half mask on her face before each new subject ROSENTHAL addresses, and the one on her right takes the mask off at the end of the passage and throws it into the garbage can. The CAMERAMAN films ROSENTHAL’s hands and the objects she handles over her shoulder, and the activity appears magnified on the screen. After each little action, ROSENTHAL throws the involved objects into the garbage too. Some SLIDES are also projected on the screen, illustrating some of the data: farm animals, trapped animals, etc.

(Mask 1) When we are little, we are close to all life and sentience. But when we play with worms we are told we are dirty and are reprimanded. Mice are EEEK. Rats are YECH. Bats are YIPES. We are not allowed to bring the stray kitten in the house. (There are rubber animals of each kind, manipulated according to the text.) This dog was rescued after being dumped from a car containing adults and children. These children learned it was okay to abandon a dog (a toy car and a small rubber dog).

(Mask 2) Science fairs promote science “projects” for schoolchildren. These include vivisection, malnutrition, starvation, poisoning, induction of psychosis, and other “procedures” in experiments on live animals.
(ROSENTHAL cuts a rubber frog with scissors.) Recently a Canoga Park high school had fourteen-year-olds slaughter lambs to learn where meat came from. (ROSENTHAL cuts rubber lambs’ necks with a large kitchen knife.) We teach our children that the best way to know an animal is to cut it up.

(Mask 3) If I want to get rid of my dog, for any reason, I can “put it down” or “put it to sleep.” People execute their pets for a multitude of reasons, most often because they are a small or large inconvenience. (ROSENTHAL winds up a toy whose tail wags. She places it in a plastic bag. The air inflates the bag. She then squeezes and manipulates the bag until all the air is gone.)

At the “shelters,” they call this killing of healthy animals (in the extremely painful decompression chamber) “euthanasia.” But doesn’t the term “euthanasia” refer to the mercy killing of the suffering terminally ill?

(Mask 4) Food animals are “prepared,” “trussed,” “cured,” and “dressed.” In little coats and hats, perhaps? (Various farm animals are manipulated.) Calves are taken from their mothers when they are four days old, immobilized so they can’t even scratch or groom themselves, kept in the dark, and, although their bodies require roughage, are fed a diet of skim milk and antibiotics, purposefully deficient in iron and amino acids, in order to produce anemia. We eat sick animals. That’s called “white veal.”

ROSENTHAL shows a toy wooden calf that moves when you push its base. She then paints it white with a brush and some gesso.

(Mask 5) Cattle lose 9 percent of their body weight in a single trip to slaughter, due to stress, shock, and dehydration. That’s called “shrinkage” (a large toy cow and a small toy cow). The animals are kept alive with massive doses of antibiotics of all kinds, without which, under industrial farming methods, they would get sick and die. They die anyway, in large percentages, of stress and crowding, and so, in addition to ingesting drugs at our table, we also consume the corpses of maimed, frustrated, depressed, and crazed animals. You decide if you favor this kind of nourishment. (ROSENTHAL injects several farm animals with a toy syringe.)

(Mask 6) Hens who are caged NINE to an eighteen-by-twenty-four-inch cage (which means one-third of a square foot per bird) for the duration of their lifetime will go mad and peck each other to death and cannibalism. The farmers call this “vices.” The “cure” for these vices? Not less crowding. That would not be cost-effective. But rather debeaking, by guillotine or hot knife, right through the quick in the horn, sometimes twice in the hen’s lifetime.

(Mask 7) Lab, farm, and zoo animals, and many pets, suffer from soli-
tary confinement, chained, caged, and alone. If you don’t think that isolation and boredom are torture, why do you think we support the proliferation of multibillion-dollar entertainment industries? And animals are even more social by nature than we are. *(ROSENTHAL places the above-named kinds of animals in little individual boxes.)*

*(Mask 8)* Animals who compete with us in the fields (rabbits, gophers) are called “pests” and “vermin.” The U.S. government incinerates coyote pups in their dens. *(ROSENTHAL lights a Bic lighter under a little animal.)* An animal who has the misfortune of getting caught in the notorious steel-jaw leghold trap (banned in sixty countries but still flourishing in the U.S.), and who is not a candidate for a fur coat—such as dogs, cats, and eagles—is called a “trash” animal by trappers. *(ROSENTHAL catches a little cat by the paw with pliers.)*

*(Mask 9)* If I hunt, I don’t murder deer. I “harvest” them. But deer are not wheat. If I want a wolf trophy for my den, I “cull” it. Who decided there were “too many wolves”? *(ROSENTHAL is shooting toys with a gun.)*

*(Mask 10)* Normal, nonsadistic young psychology students are indoctrinated with bland, hygienic terminology. They don’t torture with thirst, starvation, or electroshock; they use “negative stimulus” or “extinction techniques.” *(ROSENTHAL twists a crying monkey.)* They don’t use words like “painful” or “frightening.” That’s anthropomorphic (the cardinal sin). That implies feelings—like human feelings. But, if there is no correlation between rat sentience and human sentience, for example, and the rat is not studied to improve rat welfare, then why are multimillion dollars of your and my tax money used to fund freakish and ghoulish experiments on rats who, I can tell you from experience, are sensitive, affectionate, and intelligent? *(ROSENTHAL tears a little rat apart.)*

*(Mask 11)* When behavioral psychologists train animals to press a lever to avoid electroshock, that’s called “programmed stimuli.” The shocks themselves are called “trials.” Perrin Cohen of the University of Pennsylvania conducted an experiment where dogs underwent from twenty-six to forty-six “sessions,” each session consisting of eighty “trials,” administered at one-minute intervals. *(ROSENTHAL electrocutes a toy dog with two electrodes.)*

*(Mask 12)* Four CATS enter during the following speech and make a semicircle around the table and players. They are held in their PEOPLE’s arms. Toward the end of the cat sequence, the PEOPLE form a little group on the left, watching ROSENTHAL. Then they seem to get in a huddle, and quickly exit.

The cat, apparently, has an almost legendary reputation as a “difficult behavioral subject.” But M. Loop and N. Berkley of Florida State Univer-
sity, Tallahassee, consider the cat an extremely interesting organism for sensory experiments.” And so they devised an improved responding apparatus for cats. The apparatus was tested on an unstated number of cats obtained from the local animal shelter.” (Californians, incidentally, recently voted down a measure that would have prohibited the pounds from selling pets to research facilities.) The cats were starved to 80 percent of their normal body weight, then stood on a grid floor that could be electrified. Their heads were placed in Plexiglass cylinders, at the back of which was a key that they had to press to obtain food. Each animal was trained to press the key between fifteen hundred and two thousand times per hour. Although this seems like an astonishingly high frequency, Loop and Berkeley asserted: “We have not encountered a cat that could not be brought to this acceptable level of performance.” (ROSENTHAL has a toy cat, which she coats with hamburger meat until it is covered with it.)

The CAT people and the two MEN exit.

Animals are property and are viewed as “models,” “tools,” “receptacles,” and “renewable resources.”

They have no legal rights whatsoever, although children, ships, communities, and corporations do.

In the scientific community, the Cartesian view prevails: animals are not conscious, are not aware, do not feel pain or anything else. (ROSENTHAL picks up the cat coated with meat and hugs it close to her face.) At the same time, animals are used as models for human beings. You can’t have it both ways. (She throws the cat in the garbage, cleans her hands, and rises.)

SLIDE and VOICEOVER: “Mankind’s true moral test, its fundamental test (which lies so deeply buried from view), consists of its attitude toward those who are at its mercy: animals. And, in this respect, mankind has suffered a fundamental debacle, a debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it.”

Milan Kundera

ROSENTHAL goes upstage on the high left platform. The pit descends with the table and garbage pail.

During the next segment, the music is part of the Andante from J. S. Bach’s D Minor Concerto, for about six minutes. Voices waft over the music and alternate with it. ROSENTHAL does a “dance” or movement sequence, portraying the suffering of animals and her own empathetic suffering, combined. The MEN, wearing translucent plastic masks over their hoods, chef hats, aprons, and a right-hand padded glove for the heat (one in the shape of a sheep’s head, the other in the shape of a cow’s head), are cooking hamburgers over a bar-
becue. They have spatulas and turn the meat over. The smoke and the smell permeate the audience.


At Princeton University, Moorecroft, Lytle, and Campbell “terminally deprived: 256 young rats of food and water. They then watched the rats die from thirst and starvation. They concluded that under conditions of fatal thirst and starvation, young rats are much more active than normal adult rats given food and water.”

At Harvard University, Solomon, Kamin, and Wynne tested the effects of electric shocks on the behavior of dogs. They placed forty dogs in a device called a shuttlebox, which consists of a box divided into two compartments separated by a barrier. Initially the barrier was set at the height of the dog’s back. Hundreds of intense electric shocks were delivered to the dogs’ feet through a grid floor. At first the dogs could escape the shock if they learned to jump the barrier into the other compartment. In an attempt to “discourage” one dog from jumping, the experimenter forced the dog to jump into shock one hundred times. They said that as the dog jumped he gave a “sharp anticipatory yip which turned into a yelp when he landed on the electrified grid.” They then blocked the passage between the compartments with a piece of plate glass and tested the same dog again. The dog “jumped forward and smashed his head against the glass.” Initially dogs showed symptoms such as urination, defecation, yelping, and shrieking, trembling, attacking the apparatus, and so on. But after ten or twelve days of trials, dogs that were prevented from escaping shock ceased to resist. The experimenters reported themselves “impressed” by this and concluded that a combination of the glass barrier and the foot shock was “very effective” in eliminating jumping by dogs.

Farmers are urged by advertisements that tell them “how to make $12,000 profit sitting down,” and the way to do it is to buy the “Bacon Bin,” which is “not just a confinement house. It is a profit producing, pork production system.” Sows are closely confined for both pregnancy and birth. While pregnant they may be housed in stalls two feet wide and six
feet long, or scarcely bigger than the sow herself; or they may be tethered by a collar around the neck; or they may be in stalls and tethered. In any of these systems the sow can stand up or lie down, but she cannot turn around or exercise in any other way.

It takes 50 bobcats or lynx, 40 raccoons, and 150 rabbits or mink to make one coat. The trapped animals suffer broken bones and torn flesh and die of shock, starvation, and attacks from predators. Young pups starve. They also may suffer for days in excruciating pain before being clubbed or stomped to death by the trapper. Foxes are sometimes bled to death by having their tongues cut out. Leopards and lynxes are killed by having red-hot irons thrust up their anuses. Persian lambs, farmed in Russia, are skinned alive while still conscious to keep the curl in their coats. Broadtail is from Karakul sheep beaten with rods to force premature births. Kid gloves come from India where tiny goats are placed alive in boiling herbal liquids.

The “Lethal Dose 50%” or LD5O test is the amount of a toxic substance which will, in a single dose, kill half a group of test animals. To “avoid interference with results,” no painkillers are administered. Five million dogs, cats, rats, monkeys, and other animals die in the LD50 tests each year in the US. The test substance is forced into the animal’s stomach by tube, sometimes through a hole cut in the throat or injected under the skin, into a vein or the peritoneal lining of the abdomen, on occasion causing death by rupture from the sheer bulk of the chemical dosage; applied to the eyes, rectum, or vagina, or inhaled through a gas mask. Because all species react differently, it is impossible to accurately determine human hazards from ingested chemicals tested on other animals.

In a 1972 paper Harlow and Suomi say that because depression in humans has been characterized as embodying a state of “helplessness and hopelessness, sunken in a well of despair,” they designed a device to reproduce such a “well” both physically and psychologically. They built a vertical chamber with stainless-steel sides sloping inward to form a rounded bottom and placed young monkeys in it for periods of up to forty-five days. They found that after a few days of confinement the monkeys “spend most of the time huddled in a corner of the chamber.” The confinement produced “severe and persistent psychopathological behavior of a depressive nature.” Even nine months after release the monkeys would sit clasping their arms around their bodies instead of moving around and exploring as other monkeys do.

During the above sequence, the orchestra pit has risen high enough to have people standing on it with only their heads protruding. Fourteen of the ANIMAL PEOPLE are standing in a row as far front of the pit as possible. They are
all wearing large animal masks that cover their faces completely. They rise to their full height one at a time, so that the fourteen masked heads appear one at a time and slowly. When they are visible, they simply stand and scan the audience, moving their heads to take in the entire auditorium, orchestra, and balcony.

At the end of the tape, ROSENTHAL finds herself lying on her back, head downstage, on the lower right platform. The MEN exit with the barbecue, quickly take off their chef’s gear offstage, and return running, without their ninja hoods and carrying microphones. They zero in on the prone ROSENTHAL and assault her with questions like reporters at the scene of a disaster. The CAMERAMAN stands behind them and over ROSENTHAL and shoots a closeup of her face, which is projected on the screen. The pit descends.

MEN:

Could you describe your ordeal? How does it feel?
Can you say something to the audience out there?
You can talk, can’t you? I have a few questions . . .
Do you maintain your innocence?
If you could, would you take revenge? Why do you think this happened?
Do you think you asked for it?
I noticed you were wearing snakeskin shoes . . . an ivory bracelet . . .
you had a nice fur coat . . . your musk glands smelled good . . .
you were a gentle beagle, just right for radiation tests, for the wound lab, for concussion studies
Your horn makes us horny.
How can we take our medicine if you don’t test it first?
We can’t do without your breast, your thigh, your ribs . . .
We must have your feather boa . . .
Yes we must have your feather boa . . . We must have your feather boa . . .

ROSENTHAL attempts to answer each question but isn’t given a chance. Finally, she grabs a mike. The MEN and CAMERAMAN recede. She rises and slowly proceeds to the left platform and speaks softly at first, almost whispering, then louder, into the mike.

The lights change to a mythic and spiritual feeling. So does the MUSIC. On the right platform stand three PERSONS. The middle one, on the highest platform, has a huge blue and gold MACKAW. The other two have a ten-foot BOA and a thirteen-foot PYTHON. They are dressed in white. The three will stand in a
blue spot and move slowly in place so as to show off the animals. VIDEO of the ANIMALS.

We must have feather boas.
Feathers.
Boa.
The last, trivial incarnation of Quetzalcoatl.
The Plumed Serpent. Serpent and Bird.

SLIDES of Quetzalcoatl and of the Caduceus.
One of the MEN holds the mike for ROSENTHAL. She moves her hands and arms like serpents.
Where are we?
Midway between crawling and soaring.
The spine encases both directions. The serpent rod with its two nerve channels, the “ida” and the pingala,” spiraling around the central passageway, the “sushumna” of the spinal column, the column of Osiris. Two snakes. The chthonic force. And the Bird, perched on top, the higher realm of consciousness, liberated from Earth, the Third Eye, the Superbrain. The Caduceus is the polarization of both energies. The Quetzalcoatl is the polarized energies fused, or Satori.
The Snake and the Bird. A shorthand for enlightenment!
The pit has risen, with a basket of flowers on it. More BIRDS and SNAKES enter, followed by more ANIMALS, until all the ANIMAL PEOPLE are onstage.
ROSENTHAL comes off the left platform and walks downstage.
To be enlightened, we have need of darkness.
They, the Others, can never be enlightened, for they have never fallen from grace.
SLIDE: “No one can give anyone the gift of the idyll; only an animal can do so, because only animals were not expelled from Paradise.”
Milan Kundera
They are the light. Like the lilies of the field.
Their killings are light. They are inconsequential.
Ours are full of darkness, and the endless yoke of unforgiving karma.
Where do they get off getting off so easy?
Both MEN stand at either ends of the stage, holding the mikes. In the next sequence, they hold the mikes for individual ANIMAL PEOPLE who interject a sentence or two about their feelings for their ANIMALS, alternating with the text. ROSENTHAL sits at the downstage edge of the pit, by the basket.

How do they get away with it?
ANIMAL PERSON: What, no guilt, no angst?
(Another) ANIMAL PERSON: No pangs of conscience?
ANOTHER: No efforts to actualize?
ANOTHER: To self-realize?
ANOTHER: To be who they are?
ANOTHER: How dare they be beyond morality?
ANOTHER: Beyond the arduous apprenticeship of good and bad?
ANOTHER: Beyond the fretful reconciliation of opposites?
ANOTHER: What, no history?
ANOTHER: Who gave them permission to be whole?

Several ANIMAL PEOPLE want to speak at once. They grab the mike from each other. They all have wonderful things to say.

ROSENTHAL: We see in them who we once were. And we deny them, like immigrants who reject their language of origin. We dress them in people’s clothes and force them to imitate people’s ways so that, by this caricature, we may laugh at them and better measure the distance that, we hope, separates us from them.

During the next sequence, ROSENTHAL stands on the right side, and speaks. The MUSIC is moving and heroic. The PEOPLE and their ANIMALS stand or sit in groups, listening. The LIGHTS are dimmed on them because there is a sequence of SLIDES showing the beauty of animals. They are of all kinds of creatures in the wild as well as domesticated.

“Mankind has suffered a fundamental debacle. A debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it.”

Because, fundamentally and at the core, it is ourselves we are rejecting: our body, our nature, our untamed sexuality, our original innocence, our Buddha mind, and our connection to the living deity breathing in us all. And so, cut off and cast off, we drift, in an ethical miasma, frantically grasping at straws to keep from drowning in a world which we perceive as permeated with otherness, wherein we ourselves are the most alien to ourselves. How can we save our world which is sinking in strife, division, violence, hunger, greed, pollution, and garbage, when, like a housing development built on a refuse landfill, our society’s very foundation rests on the rotten basement of moral fraud? There is no justification for our persecution of the Others. We do it because we are stronger. This democracy,
like every other human society, is erected on the fascist oppression of other sentient beings, because they are other and we have might.

There are no relevant differences justifying this persecution.

Not Rationality, or we should persecute children, the senile, and the insane.

Not Language, or we should persecute infants, the retarded, and the dumb.

Not Consciousness, for the Others are conscious.

Not Sentience, for the Others feel.

Not Intelligence, for some animals would fare better than some people.

No. There is no difference that is morally relevant. Although there are differences, in degree as in kind, just as there are between races, sexes, and ages within our own species, none of which are, at least ostensibly, recognized as morally relevant.

There is no justification for this abuse, but there is a reason:

The reason is: they are Other, and we are stronger, and we want to exploit their bodies and their minds.

But if “might makes right,” then we have done away with morality altogether and, as a species, are morally bankrupt.

We must repair this deep and long-lived insult, and the task, far from being puerile, is central to our time.

For our own species to be revivified, this is our only hope.

MEN: “Biting through has success. It is favorable to let justice be administered.”

ROSENTHAL comes to down center stage. One of the MEN kneels with his back to the audience a few steps left, holding up a mike. The other MAN crouches close to her, holding the basket and feeding her flowers, one at a time. The music wells up to a beautiful and soulful march, as all the ANIMAL PEOPLE begin to walk with their ANIMALS in a wide circle all around the set. As they pass down center, they speak their animal’s name into the mike. Then they come before ROSENTHAL, who touches the ANIMAL and gives the PERSON a flower. After that “sacrament,” they continue the circle and exit left. During this, a VOICEOVER is heard, and a SLIDE appears.

VOICEOVER and SLIDE: “We need another and a wiser and perhaps more mystical concept of animals. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far beneath ourselves. And therein we err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear . . . They are not underlings; they are other
nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the Earth.

Harry Beston

_During the above, ROSENTHAL climbs up to the highest right platform. She sits there as the MEN fetch her DOG, ZATOICHI, and her CAT, KABBALAMOBILE. (In Raleigh, North Carolina, it was two RATS, SAGE and RIDING HOOD.) They sit together and play, as the MUSIC returns to the fairy tale theme._

**VOICEOVER:** The third day, the youngest went to the forest. She too lost her way. When she came to the hut, the old man asked her to prepare supper. She made soup and set it on the table. Then she asked, “Am I to eat and the poor animals have nothing? I will look after them first.” She stewed barley for the cock and the hen, and brought a whole armful of sweet-smelling hay for the cow. “I hope you will like this, dear animals,” she said, “and you shall have a refreshing draught in case you are thirsty.” After that she said: “Ought we not to go to bed?” The animals said:

_Thou hast eaten with us_
_Thou hast drunk with us_
_Thou hast had kind words for all of us_
_We wish thee good night._

The maiden went upstairs and lay down on one bed, the old man on the other. At midnight, the girl was awakened by a tremendous crash, as if the very roof had fallen in. Then all grew quiet and when she felt she wasn’t hurt, she fell back to sleep. But the next morning, in the brilliance of sunshine, she woke, and what did she see? She was lying in a vast hall; everything around her shone in noble splendor. Three richly clad attendants came and asked for orders. And, next to her on the bed, the old man had vanished, and in his stead was a young and handsome man who sat up and said: “I am a king’s son. I was bewitched and turned into an old man, and my three attendants were turned into a cock, a hen, and a brindled cow. The spell was not to be broken until a girl came to us whose heart was so good that she showed herself full of love, not only toward mankind, but toward animals. And that, you have done, and by you we are set free, and the old hut in the forest has become a royal palace once again.”

And so they were married and lived long and happy lives. And the two mean sisters were led to the forest to live as servants to the charcoal burner until they had grown kinder and would not leave poor animals to suffer hunger.

_Toward the end of the VOICEOVER, autumn leaves fall down softly over ROSENTHAL and her ANIMALS. It looks like a Hallmark card! The VIDEO_
screen has been showing closeups of ZATOICHI and KABBALAMOBILE (or the RATS). At the end, it pulls back to take in ROSENTHAL and the ANIMALS as a group. The lights fade; the MUSIC ends. BLACKOUT.

As a curtain call, all the PEOPLE and ANIMALS circle the set once more, acknowledging the audience as they pass down center.

First performed December 18, 1984 at the Japan America Theatre in Los Angeles, as part of the “Art of Spectacle” series, cosponsored by the University of California, Los Angeles; Some Serious Business; and Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) Gallery. When performed at the University of North Carolina in Raleigh, all the animals were chosen because they had been abused by humans and also rescued by humans. They each had a history, and their bios were featured in the program. All the companion animals were from the local shelter. At the end of each show (there were three), they were presented to the audience for adoption. All dogs and cats were thus adopted.