Chapter 7. Conclusions

The present study is an exciting marriage of science and philosophy.

Previous studies of attitudes towards animals suggest they are far from universal. Many existing studies in the area are largely based on AW in the Western world, which represents approximately 12% of world human population. Little attention has been given to animal protection in other parts of the world. People sometimes assume that animal welfare is equivalent to animal protection, or positive attitudes towards animals, though dramatic differences between animal welfare and animal rights have gained some attention. (Francione, 1996; Parker, 2006).

The present study has been placed in a global context; it not only investigated the attitudes of people from vastly different economic, cultural, religious and political backgrounds, but also investigated the relationships between attitudes towards animal issues and world issues. Many new findings have been made, but only those most important are presented in this chapter.

The choice of major conclusions in this chapter was determined by the degree of confidence in the findings. Those that are presented in this chapter are considered to be the most conclusive or most significant. It is true that many issues may undermine the representativeness of the survey results — for example, the results of one or two AIs of some nations are likely significantly biased. It is highly unlikely, however, that the findings reported in this chapter, such as the ranks of the indices, are significantly biased, because they are calculated on the basis of a large number of variables of all nations. It is believed that the local bias of some AIs have been mostly cancelled out in the process of producing indices. Therefore, the conclusions based on those findings are considered to be important.

- Definitions for animal protection and vegetarianism are different in different societies.

- Many factors are found to be associated with people's attitudes towards animals. Prevalent stereotypes of the attitudes of some societies are incomplete and unrepresentative.

- There are three basic dimensions of attitudes to animals: avoidance of animal suffering, reverence for animals, and new welfarism. Avoidance of animal suffering and reverence for animals are two fundamentally unrelated types of attitudes towards animals. By knowing one dimension, people cannot predict one's attitudes to other dimensions. Avoidance of animal suffering and reverence for animals are products of many other factors. They are in two dimensions. People cannot judge which dimension of attitude is 'superior' to another – People cannot conclude that societies emphasising animal suffering are better than societies emphasising reverence for animals in terms of animal protection.

- Avoidance of animal suffering is commonly known as animal welfare. Classic AW organizations are 'Prevention of Cruelty' societies. For the definition of cruelty, 'suffering' is the keyword. AR is the combination of animal welfare and reverence for animals. Societies can have a low welfare level, but high rights levels when the AW level is low but the reverence for animals is high.

- A holistic world view is tied to a high level of reverence for animals.

- New welfarism, a term coined by Gary Francione is identified scientifically. Agreeing with the description given by Francione, this attitude does not challenge the property status of animals. It is found to be the main-stream attitude behind the 'animal rights' movement in Europe. The scientific definitions provided by the statistical analysis also agree with Francione that new welfarism is different from animal rights. Integrity of animals and zoo issues are important parts of animal rights, but less attention has been given to them by the animal rights movement in the industrialized Western world.

- In total, the four types of animal protection explain 32.8% variation of overall attitudes to animals. The degree of the affiliation with the different types of animal protections (based on weighted and adjusted datasets) are: (The UK ranks are less conclusive.)
  New Welfarism — UK>SR>MK>ES>CN,CZ,IE,NO>IR,SE>KR;
  Animal Welfare — UK> ES,IR,NO,SR>CN,CZ, IE, MK,SE;
  Reverence for Animals — UK>MK>CN,SR>ES>CZ,IE, KR, NO,SE>IR;
  Animal Rights — UK>SR>MK,ES>CN,CZ,IE, IR, KR,NO,SE;

- The ranks of other indices are:
  Naturalness (Genetic Change) — IE,SE,UK>ES,MK,NO,SR>CZ>CN>KR>IR
  Autonomy — MK>SR>CN>CZ,ES,KR>IE,IR,NO,SE,UK
  Experimentation — CN,CZ,ES,IE,IR, KR,SE,SR>NO, UK>MK

Wildlife Protection — UK,CN>CZ,ES,IR, KR,MK, NO,SR>IE,SE

Spiritual Power — IE>CN>CZ,SE>ES, MK,NO,SR,UK>IR>KR

In total, the nine indices explain 50% variation of the overall attitudes to animals.

- Respect for the autonomy of animals, which is sometimes confused with the avoidance of animals, is identified as a positive attitude towards animals. It is the core of reverence for animals.

- Although positive associations between concern for world issues and support for the different types of animal protection have been found in many nations, associations between concern for world issues and support for animal welfare were found in more nations. This means attitude to animal welfare is a more consistent predictor for attitudes to world issues compares to other types of animal protection at the present time

- Females, on average, have a higher level of positive attitudes to animals than males.

- The overall ranking of sentience is: Human Infant> apes>other mammals> birds> cold blood animals.

- Eastern tradition, Greek tradition and traditions of many indigenous societies have a higher levels reverence for animals than Abrahamic religions.

- Some evidence suggests that people in higher positions in the social hierarchy tend to have low reverence for animals. More research is needed to answer why and how hierarchy has an influence on attitudes.

- Students from nations of similar ideology, such as those having communist influences, share similar overall attitudes to animals and world issues. However the observation can also be explained by the similar human welfare levels in the nations.

The present study has analysed much literature and first hand data regarding attitudes towards animals in different parts of the world. Differences and similarities were compared, and possible causes were explored. Those factors influencing attitudes can be summarized into two main categories:

- Memes — all information that is not passed down by genes between generations. They form the personal philosophy about animals. This source is presented in the form of:
  - tradition;

- o religion;
- o political ideology;
- o education, etc.
- Genes —inherited attitudes to animals of human. It includes:
    - o inherited empathy (e.g. gender, personality),
    - o own position in the social hierarchy (e.g. socio-economic status),
    - o genetic similarity to animals (e.g. sentience of animals, etc.)

Based on the overall information produced by the study, the present author concluded that although many factors were found to be associated with attitudes towards animals, memes and genes are two fundamental origins, and the two can be further unified by the information they carry.

Recommendations and Future work

1. There is a need to further the understanding of attitudes to animals in different parts of the world. More surveys of this kind, using identical questionnaires, similar survey methods and broad cultural coverage, are invited to confirm and extend the findings of GAAS 2007/08. More nations with large potential differences should be included. According to current theory of human migration, which is based on the study of mtDNA (CDNAS, n.d.), primary needs are to study university students in Africa (more diversity and difference is expected), and North and South America. When possible, populations other than university students should be included to examine the difference between students and the general public. When analysing the results, the bias of non-extremism must be corrected.

2. The JM Welfare Index and JM Rights Index should be tested. When new data become available, the equation should be revised to enhance its predictive ability.

3. Organizations working for animal protection are advised to increase the weight of the genetic approach in policy making. Currently, many organizations working for animal welfare (RSPCA-AU, 2006; WSPA, 2008; DAFF, 2009) mainly use a utility based approach — for example, giving farm animals a uniform policy, companion animals a uniform policy. This method grants a pet sheep and meat sheep, a pet dog and a pest (feral) dog, dramatically different treatment — although, at a fundamental level, our inherited empathy works for both in the same way.

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4. The different types of animal protection found by the study should be disseminated to the public for educational purposes. The academic community is advised to be alert to the assumption that AW is equivalent to positive attitudes to animals. More studies about other types of animal protection are encouraged. New disciplines may be established for the other types of animal protection in parallel with animal welfare science.

5. The influence of social hierarchy on attitudes should be investigated systematically.

6. The influence of political ideology should be investigated systematically.

7. Objective indices for animal protection should be created.

8. More interdisciplinary studies related to attitudes to animals are encouraged.