



Whether consciously or not, nearly everyone believes in the "What goes around, comes around" world view. Some call this "justice," some call it "karma," and others just keep getting blind-sided by the "effects" of causes they have set into motion many moons ago and wondering, "Why?" When we do think about the law of cause and effect, we commonly do so in humanistic-- "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"--terms. But, what about the human-animal connection and the causes we've set into motion in this realm?

Since the beginning of time we have been using, abusing, eating, killing for sport, training for our

amusement, racing until they drop, and destroying the habitat of the animal kingdom. Many do this without conscience, and with a religiously inspired sense of entitlement, referring to the Book of Genesis when morality and ethics are called into question. After all, God gave mankind "dominion" over the "beasts of the Earth," didn't he? As with most things read, however, we tend to pick and choose the passages most compatible with and least upsetting to our already formed points-of-view to internalize and remember. If we really scrutinize Chapter One, verses 26-30 of this book, we find that: to "subdue" is used in the sense of "to bring under cultivation" and refers to the land; that God gave mankind

"every herb yielding seed" and "every tree which bears fruit yielding seed" for food, not animals; and, that he gave us dominion over animals in the context of creating human beings in his image and likeness and *permitting* us to govern the animal kingdom, as he governs us. While "dominate" connotes the exercise of power and control, it also means to be the major factor or influence in the lives of those under our control. Whether that influence be constructive or destructive is entirely a matter of free will.

So, how do you think we have handled this immense privilege and trust so far? While I imagine responses will vary according to individual moral codes and sensitivities,

I'm thinking the one thing we might all be able to agree upon is that this is a question worthy of serious consideration. Whether it be the increased proliferation of mosquitoes and other disease carrying insects due to displacement of the birds and amphibians that would naturally feed on them; changes in our body/mind chemistry resulting from ingesting the flesh of animals shot through with antibiotics, hormones, and who knows what else; or losing entire species of land, air and sea creatures due to over-harvesting and pollution, we *will* get to experience the results of our actions. Even worse, where our treatment of dogs, cats, and other animals we have domesticated as pets is concerned, I believe an even more insidious effect is taking place. The abuse of an innocent who loves, trusts, and depends on us for its very existence diminishes and brutalizes us as human beings. It severs us from our connection with the natural world and desensitizes us to pain and suffering. It turns us into gods of destruction.

And, at a subconscious level, it compels us to question and fear the intrinsic nature of the God who holds dominion over us. After all, we are made in his likeness and he allows us to govern the animal kingdom as an expression of that likeness. What if our God has within him the same tendency toward ruthless domination and cruelty that incites us to treat animals as we do? What if one day he gives himself permission to govern us in the same way that we have given ourselves permission to govern them?

Perhaps 2012 will be the year of awakening and enlightenment that so many are pinning their hopes on. Then again, maybe not. In either case, this could be the perfect year to begin the reversal of at least one negative momentum we have set into motion--our self-centered exploitation of the animal kingdom. Whatever we decide to do, or not do, we *will* get to experience the effects of our conscious, free-willed decisions. That's how it works. Let's make this the year we begin to bank *good* karma.