

# Sentimentality and the Enemies of Animal Protection

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## **Abstract:**

Ethical arguments promoting a higher moral status for nonhuman animals have developed a pace since the 1960s. These developments, however, have not been matched by a radical transformation in the way we treat nonhuman animals. In the 1990s, an alternative discourse emerged—the morality of care. Sympathy, empathy, compassion and pity form a family of sentiments that constitute the caring ethic. Sentimentality, the term associated with sentiment, is invariably invoked in our relationships to nonhuman animals. Although carrying positive connotations in the eighteenth century, sentimentality has since become a word of contempt and has been used to discredit our natural sympathy for nonhumans and to disparage animal protection reforms, both past and present. Here I argue for the rehabilitation of the term sentimentality and support Rorty's view that we need to create a moral sentimental education if we are to improve the world, and in particular the world as experienced by nonhuman animals. I believe that this educational enterprise should be directed at the pet-owning group, who are generally speaking already committed animal-lovers and who could be powerful agents for change in securing more justice for nonhuman animals.

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