

The Year of the Animal in France

The Year of the Animal in France examines the complex and often contradictory relationship between humans and animals in France from the Middle Ages to the present day. The book explores the ways in which animals have been used for food, clothing, labor, and companionship, as well as the ways in which they have been persecuted, feared, and revered. Through a wide range of sources, including literature, art, law, and science, The Year of the Animal in France provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the changing status of animals in French society.

Animals in the Medieval World

In the Middle Ages, animals were seen as both a source of sustenance and a threat to human life. They were hunted for food and fur, and they were also used for labor, transportation, and warfare. However, animals were also seen as creatures with souls, and they were often accorded a degree of respect and compassion. This ambivalent attitude towards animals is reflected in the literature and art of the period, which often depicts animals as both helpers and hazards.



1668: The Year of the Animal in France (Zone Books)

by April Parker

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 492 pages



One of the most famous examples of the medieval ambivalence towards animals is the story of Saint Francis of Assisi. Francis was a devout Christian who believed that all creatures were equal in the eyes of God. He preached to animals, and he even founded a monastery for them. However, Francis also recognized the dangers that animals could pose to humans, and he urged his followers to be cautious when interacting with them.

Animals in the Renaissance and Enlightenment

The Renaissance and Enlightenment saw a growing interest in the natural world, and this interest extended to animals. Scholars began to study animal behavior and anatomy, and they developed new theories about the relationship between humans and animals. Some thinkers, such as René Descartes, argued that animals were simply machines, while others, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, believed that animals were capable of feeling and experiencing emotions.

The changing attitudes towards animals during the Renaissance and Enlightenment had a significant impact on the way that animals were treated. Animals were increasingly seen as companions and friends, and they were often given a more prominent place in human society. However, animals were also still seen as a source of food and labor, and they continued to be exploited in a variety of ways.

Animals in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a number of significant changes in the way that animals were treated. The Industrial Revolution led

to the development of new technologies that made it possible to exploit animals on a larger scale than ever before. Animals were used in factories, mines, and slaughterhouses, and they were often subjected to horrific conditions. In addition, the rise of scientific experimentation led to the use of animals in laboratory tests, which often involved pain and suffering.

However, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also saw the emergence of a new movement for animal rights. Animal rights activists argued that animals were sentient beings who deserved to be treated with compassion and respect. They campaigned for laws to protect animals from cruelty and exploitation, and they worked to raise awareness of the plight of animals in laboratories and factory farms.

Animals in the Twenty-First Century

The twenty-first century has seen a continuation of the trends that began in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Animals continue to be exploited in a variety of ways, but there is also a growing awareness of the importance of animal welfare. Animal rights activists continue to campaign for laws to protect animals, and they are also working to educate the public about the ethical implications of eating meat, wearing fur, and using animals in entertainment.

The Year of the Animal in France Today

The Year of the Animal in France is a timely and important book that sheds light on the complex and often contradictory relationship between humans and animals. The book provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the changing status of animals in French society, and it offers valuable insights into the ethical implications of our treatment of animals.

The Year of the Animal in France is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of animals, the history of France, or the ethical implications of our treatment of animals. The book is a valuable contribution to the growing literature on human-animal relationships, and it is sure to spark debate and discussion for years to come.



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