

無知？ それとも、無関心？

「仲間に対する最悪の罪は、彼らを憎むことではなく、彼らに無関心であること。これこそ、残酷さの本質にほかならない。」

(ジョージ・バーナード・ショー)



日本に着いたばかりのオーストラリア人の先生ふたりが、赴任先の校長と会うために車で学校へ向かっていました。途中、車にはねられて道に横たわる犬を目撃した彼らは言いました——「車をとめて。犬を助けなくっちゃ。」困ったのは、運転していた日本人の教師——「そんなことをすれば、約束に遅れますよ。」「かまわないよ。いいから、早くとめなさい！」——彼らは同僚の言葉を無視して、繰り返します。止むを得ず、日本人の教師は車をターンさせて、怪我をした犬の所に戻りました。「病院に運ばなくっちゃ」——結局のところ、同僚は無理やりに承知させられ、動物病院をさがして緊急処置を頼む運びになったのです。ちなみに、犬は、その後、回復して、めでたく、飼い主のもとに戻ったのですが……先生は校内誌にこの事件について書き、次のように締めくくりました——「もし、私が犬だったら

…やはり、オーストラリアに住みたいと思うだろう」と。

「滋賀県からの便り」(本紙 14 ~ 15 ページ)の中でデイビッドとスーザンが指摘しているように、残念なのは、人々が動物の境遇にあまりにも無関心であり、苦しんでいるのを見ても何も行動を起こそうとしないこと。「自分にはカンケイナイ」症候群が蔓延しているのです。アークに電話をしてきて、「かわいそうな犬がいるんですけど、“お宅”で何とかしていただけませんか？」と要求する多数の人たちも同様です。「どうして、“あなた”がご自分で何とかしないのですか？」と私どもが聞くと、彼らはきまって、言い訳をします。「仕事が忙しくて…」とか、『家から遠いので…』とか、「近所の人々のペットだから悶着を起こしたくない…」など。「犬に迷惑をかけられる」とすぐに文句を言うが、「犬が迷惑し

Ignorance or Indifference?

"The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them but to be indifferent towards them. That's the essence of inhumanity."

George Bernard Shaw

Two newly-arrived Australian teachers were being taken by car to their school for a meeting with the headmaster. On the way they saw a dog lying in the road. It had been hit by a car. "Stop the car, we must help it." The Japanese teacher accompanying them looked embarrassed. "If we stop, we'll be late for the meeting." Damn the meeting, just stop the car," they repeated, ignoring him. Finally he was forced to turn back and return to the injured dog in the road. "We must get it to a hospital," and so it went on until they had persuaded the teacher to find a hospital and make sure that the dog had emergency treatment. The story had a happy ending since the dog recovered and its owner was traced. The teacher wrote of this incident in the school magazine, at the end of which he commented, "If I were a dog, I would prefer to live in Australia."

The sad thing is, as David and Susan point out in their letter from Shiga Prefecture (p 14-15), is that people are so indifferent or they refuse to take any action when they see an animal in distress. It's the 'it's-not-my-problem' syndrome. Like many people who phone ARK saying 'I've seen this poor dog, isn't there anything YOU can do?' When we then say "why don't YOU do something?" they always have an excuse: too busy with job, living too far away, the owners are neighbours therefore don't want to cause trouble. And yet they would be the first to complain if the dog was causing THEM trouble in some way, but not if the dog is in trouble itself.

Wherever we go in Japan, in every city, every town, down every street, we see dogs kept in a sorry state; dogs in trouble. This is especially

evident in summer when the temperature can exceed 30°C and in the cities you can add an extra 10 degrees on top due to air-conditioners pumping out hot air and to concrete buildings and surfaces, which remain hot to the touch, even at night. Is it that owners who tie their dogs outside in these conditions are ignorant or is it that they simply don't care?

We were passing through the Japan sea-port of Maizuru this summer when we spotted a dog tied to a miserable plastic kennel inches from a double-laned main road where trucks poured passed in a never-ending flow, belching out diesel fumes. The poor dog was exposed to the south and west sun for the entire day and it was obviously distressed as it lay panting, seeking a meagre bit of shade behind its kennel. The kennel was thick with pollution grime, so was the dog's coat and so, no doubt, were its lungs and intestines. We asked the owner sitting comfortably in his air-conditioned office whether he didn't consider the dog's situation miserable and cruel. He was quite shocked when we used the word 'cruel.' He was fond of his dog and didn't see anything wrong in the way it was kept. But "would you tie your child outside in this way?" "Of course not," he laughed. He wouldn't let us take the dog and said he'd "put it in the back garden where it was cooler." Fortunately, we know people living nearby who can monitor the situation and make sure that he keeps his word. As we left he held the dog up and made it wave its paw to wish us goodbye.

He wasn't a bad man, he just didn't understand that cruelty does not only mean beating, torturing, tormenting an animal or depriving it of food and water, it also includes exposing it to extremes of weather, in this case the hot sun without shade and the constant noise, vibration and poisonous fumes of passing traffic.

We should all have the courage to 'speak up' when we see an animal in distress, it often can make a difference.