

Radio Netherlands' *The State We're In* interview with Gary Francione

Transcribed by David Stasiak

Announcer: Given everything you've heard so far, you may think we have a natural right to pets. But wait a second...[audio clip of dogs barking]. Gary Francione teaches law and philosophy at Rutgers University in the US. He argues that we have no right to own pets whatsoever.

Gary: We cannot justify domestication. We simply cannot do it. Whether we're domesticating those animals to be eaten or whether we're domesticating those animals to serve us as pets, we can't justify it.

Announcer: Okay. Now, having said that, just at the very beginning of this interview, I heard a lot of dogs barking in the background in your house. You have pets?

Gary: Of course I do. I believe we have a moral obligation to take care of the animals we have brought into existence. That's a moral obligation we have. Our dogs are all rescued dogs, they come from tragic circumstances, we regard them as refugees, they would be dead if we didn't have them, I'm glad that we have them, I love them dearly. But if there were two dogs left on the planet and someone asked me "Should they reproduce so that we can continue to have pets?", my answer would be no.

Announcer: Okay but for some people, a cat, or maybe even a donkey, is the only friend they have. Can need or loneliness justify having a pet?

Gary: No, absolutely not. No more so than – you could have said the same thing in 1840 about slavery. There were some people who had very close relationships with slaves. You could say "Well, you know, for some people their slaves are the most significant relationship that they have". Is it okay to have slavery in those circumstances? The answer is no, absolutely not. We have a tendency to believe that dogs and cats, they're different from cows and pigs and chickens because, yeah, we might treat them brutally, but we treat dogs and cats and other animals that we have as non-human companions very well. And the answer is some of us do, most of us don't. *Most* dogs end up not in the home they started off in, they end up being dumped in a shelter, or being taken to a veterinarian to be killed, or dumped on a street. I think there's a really fundamental problem with the institution of pets, and that is: animals don't really belong in our world, they're animals. We're human animals, they're non-human animals. They don't belong in our world. And I think the problem of domestication is you take animals and you domesticate them, and you put them in this netherworld of vulnerability where they're really not part of our world and they're really not part of the animal world, and they live in this sort of strange sort of 'in between' world. You know, my dogs are dependent on me totally for when they eat, when they drink, when they sleep, they have to hope I'm not too engrossed in my work and that I remember to let them out. Or that I remember to fill their water dish. They're *totally* dependent on me for their entire lives. And most people who know anything about dogs will tell you that they've never met a dog that isn't really

neurotic. And there's a reason for that. And there's a reason why cats behave in the way that they do, and they often exhibit and usually exhibit various neuroses, because it's very difficult for them, they don't really fit in our world. We make them fit in our world because we fetishize them and we want to have relationships with them. But in a sense, it's not something that really – it benefits them to some degree. It's better for them to have a loving relationship with a human companion than be out on the streets, but I do not think the institution overall benefits the animals, benefits these animals that we call pets.