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Steven Wise has spent his legal career in courts across the United States, championing the interests of dogs, cats, dolphins, deer, goats, sheep, African gray parrots, and American bald eagles. In *Rattling the Cage*, Wise--who teaches "animal rights law" at several academic institutions, including Harvard Law School--presents a thorough survey of the legal, philosophical, and religious origins of humankind's inhumanity toward citizens of the animal kingdom. Wise's devotion for animals is evident as he explains how the bigoted notion that nonhuman creatures possess mere instrumental value rather than intrinsic value has led to their worldwide enslavement for human benefit.

Rattling the Cage offers Wise's argument to secure the blessings of liberty for chimpanzees and bonobos. Despite the cognitive, emotional, social, and sexual sophistication exhibited by both species, Wise acknowledges that advocating the legal personhood of what others might consider hairy little beasts leaves him vulnerable to ridicule and marginalization as a fringe academic. He compares his struggle to that of Galileo, recognizing that anachronistic cultural and religious beliefs may disable modern judges from ruling according to correct principles just as the irrational convictions of Galileo's contemporaries forced them to cling to an Earth-centered universe that no longer existed. "Think of a Fundamentalist Protestant faced with a decision about teaching evolution in the public schools or a Roman Catholic deciding a question of abortion rights," Wise suggests, then turns the rhetoric up a notch: "Is it surprising that Nazi judges dispensed Nazi justice and that racist judges dispensed racist justice?" Wise seems certain, though, that our concept of justice eventually will evolve to the point where no chimp or bonobo will be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law--perhaps the best for which any primate can hope, at least until apes preside over courts to administer a justice of their own making.