

I was thinking this morning about inalienable rights. At that moment, for some reason, I happened to look at the cat. And I realized, with remarkable clarity of vision, that cats, too, have inalienable rights. They are different from those that we call our own, of course, and their list of such claims is undoubtedly accompanied by a significant amount of profanity and ill humor directed toward anyone or anything that interferes with their ability to assert those rights.

There had been a slight altercation this morning that may have brought all this to mind. Blue the border collie and Muzzy are, ordinarily, pretty good friends. They seem to get along quite well most of the time. Unlike her sister Kate, Blue isn't terribly afraid of the cat. Kate, on the other hand, will avoid any conflict with Muzzy and go to all lengths to stay out of trouble. She will not come in or go out if the cat is in the path and will take long, convoluted routes from one place to another if an evil amber eye is aimed in her direction.

But, this morning, it was Blue that had the problem. I don't know what happened, but Muzzy must have bitten or scratched, something that is in his power to do. Blue bared her teeth—something I've never seen her do before for any reason, and she growled. The cat sat there, unperturbed.

I let Blue go out to regain her placidity and her good judgement. Muzzy strolled unconcernedly to the heat register and plopped down, taking up at least half of the rising warmth from the basement stove.

So, after some contemplation and an attempt at reading the inscrutable mind of Muzzy the Cat, I think I have a pretty reliable list of his inalienable rights. Here it is:

1. I can sit or lie anywhere I wish—including on the table.
2. The heat register is mine.
3. Cat treats are required to be available at all times.
4. If I jump on the bed during the night and scratch or bite an occupant, that person has displeased me, and it is my right and duty to punish.
5. I can choose which lap to sit on, and the decision is not up for negotiation by the owner of the lap.
6. I may wash any of my parts in full view of anyone in the room, preferably visitors.
7. I need not take "no" for an answer to anything. Ex. If I want to go out NOW, it doesn't mean two minutes from now, and the person who mans the door must oblige me.
8. If my water dish is not full, I have an inalienable right to drink out of the toilet.
9. If my water dish IS full, I have an inalienable right to drink out of the toilet.
10. Dogs have NO rights.
11. I am CAT, and the preceding ten articles are absolute.

The only consolation for the humans—and dogs—in this household is that cats sleep as much as 20 hours a day. Shhhh!