Introduction

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This issue of *Essays in Philosophy* provides evidence both of the dynamic nature of animal ethics and of the multidisciplinary character of the subject. Clearly, animal ethics encompasses not only philosophy and the other humanities, but the natural and social sciences as well.

While the essays are arranged alphabetically, the grouping below according to common themes may be of use to some readers.

**Critique of liberal political theory**

In “Silent Parties: A Problem for Liberalism?” Paola Cavalieri notes that a central criticism of liberalism is often that it is too abstract and formal to provide the basis of an acceptable society. Cavalieri argues to the contrary that liberalism is not formal enough: it conceals a substantive aspect concerning which beings have moral status. Using Thomas Nagel’s approach to equality and partiality, she identifies three spheres of democratic decision-making. Area A is the basic one, in which basic individual interests are protected from state or other individuals’ interference. Area B is the political sphere, in which certain infringements of non-basic interests are admitted, for example in taxation. Area C is the sphere of private choice in which no other party is in question. On this basis, she points out a paradox that arises with regard to how liberal societies address both the question of abortion and the question of the treatment of animals. Liberal societies claim that the interests in question – those of non-sentient human beings and of animals—can be excluded from Area A not because they are non-basic interests but because the individuals who bear them can be discounted. Thus while it does not evaluate competing conceptions of the good life, liberalism nevertheless evaluates the comparative moral status of individuals. In contrast, liberal societies should use the only analytic definition of individual, which is not that of a rational moral agent but that of a chooser. Thus the interests of nonhuman animals and of sentient fetuses should be included in Area A. She concludes by describing the pernicious effect of the contractarianism descended from Hobbes, which survives in the contemporary insistence on the ability to speak out for oneself and on power. In its place Cavalieri calls for a truly impartial liberalism.

**Analysis of widely held beliefs**

Bart Gruzalski in “The Ability to Be Moral Does Not Make Humans Superior to Nonhuman Animals” notes that the ability to be moral is a characteristic often cited by philosophers to support the claim that humans have far greater moral worth than nonhuman animals. But does it in fact do so? Gruzalski discusses three forms of this “consensus account.” The first version is that we value beings who choose to be moral more highly than beings who lack this ability. For example, according to Mary Ann Warren, the value of a being is a social invention. Gruzalski replies that prevailing attitudes have in the past supported such unacceptable practices as sexism. The second version is that the ability to choose to be
moral leads to a much richer and more satisfying life than would otherwise be the case. Here Gruzalski examines the writings of R.G. Frey and provides a number of objections to Frey’s view, including the observation that the mental operations involved in autonomy often diminish the quality of experiences. Gruzalski also explores some of the complexities involved in the moral assessment of autonomy. The third version of the consensus account is that the ability to choose to be moral makes being inherently more valuable. In response, Gruzalski cites Kant’s notion of the holy will, which lacks such choice, as superior to the imperfect human will. Gruzalski also points to the negative inherent value of the choice to be immoral. He concludes that the ability to choose to be moral fails to confer superiority on human beings.

Andrew Linzey in “The Powers That Be” discusses four mechanisms which prevent us from recognizing sentience in animals. The first is the use of misdescription in order to denigrate the group in question. Linzey points out the inherited abuse found in our current language. The second mechanism is that of misrepresentation. Descartes’ doctrine of animals as unthinking automata is found in many Christian discussions of animals. Behaviorist ideology has also contributed to the rejection in American and British psychology of the possibility of animal pain. In addition, Linzey notes that the misrepresentation of animals is accompanied by the misrepresentation of their advocates. Misdirection is the third mechanism; Linzey analyses six arguments supporting the minimizing or belittling of suffering in animals. These arguments consist of dogmatic skepticism, the insistence on conclusive scientific evidence before any judgment about suffering is made, the undiscriminating rejection of anthropomorphism, the indiscriminate attribution of sentience to plants, the linking of sentiency to rational thought, and the view that animal pain is not morally important. The fourth mechanism is that of misperception, in which animals are seen as objects instead of individuals who matter in themselves. Linzey concludes by calling for new educational opportunities so that all students will be encouraged to rethink the dominant intellectual paradigm, which fails to see and value animals for what they are.

In “What’s More Important? Steve F. Sapontzis argues that there is a failure of reasoning involving in holding both the belief that animal are subjects of a life and that it is morally permissible to sacrifice their interests routinely to satisfy human needs and wants. Many people who hold both beliefs also believe in a priority principle which assigns greater weight to human values than to animal values. Sapontzis begins by refuting the view that death is not a misfortune for animals. He does so by arguing that the possibility that animals cannot understand death does not entail that their lives cannot be of value for them since something can be in someone’s interest due to its impact on her or his well-being, even though s/he takes no interest in it. Sapontzis affirms that we have a moral obligation to better the lives of animals in our care by arguing that limiting our positive moral obligations to humans is a presumption motivated by self-interest. He then proceeds to provide a wide-ranging analysis of six commonly held formulations of the priority principle, all of which favor human interests. He concludes that those who believe both that animals are subjects of a life and that they may be routinely sacrificed for human interests commit a mistake of reasoning.

The Relationship between Animal Ethics and Science

In “Humans and Hybrids” Angela Ballantyne discusses the advent of human-animal hybrids created through somatic cell nuclear transfer experiments. These experiments, publicized in 1998, involve the production of cow-human hybrid embryos. The persistence of the human-animal dualism is
evident in the regulations governing human embryo experimentation as opposed to those governing animal experimentation. Many ethics committees accord human embryos moral value but not moral status. Research is therefore acceptable but only under strict conditions and only when necessary for medical or scientific inquiry. Ballantyne terms this the “pragmatic” stance. In contrast, regulations in both the U.S. and Australia allow extensive use of animals. Thus the motivation for creating human-animal hybrids is an attempt to dodge the “legislative minefield” of human embryo experimentation. The creation of such hybrids is quite common: Ballantyne cites hamster eggs used in male infertility tests, mice genetically engineered to produce human antibodies, and transgenic mice used to study human gene segments. These hybrids create little ethical concern because the resulting creature looks and acts like a mouse. By contrast, the cow-human embryos created by Advanced Cell Technology and Stem Cell Science are 95% human. Such hybrids cannot be classified as either human or animal because they are both. Ballantyne argues that we should abandon the dualism which sees humans as morally distinct and superior to animals and replace it with a liberal sentience or interests view. Such a change would allow greater scientific freedom as well as result in the creation of fewer hybrids.

C.C. Croney, B. Gardner, and S. Baggot in “Beyond Animal Husbandry” discuss the study of farm animal cognition, which is largely motivated by the growing concerns about the treatment of such animals. They note that there is a clear link between people’s opinions about animals’ mental capabilities and their views of how animals should be treated. Croney, Gardner, and Baggot adopt a definition of “welfare” as designating the animal’s state as it copes with the environment. Psychological factors, such as a farm animal’s level of sentience or awareness, almost certainly impact how well it copes with its circumstances. The authors note that few research efforts have been directed at farm animal emotions and feelings. In addition, cognitive processes such as memory, attention and conceptualization in farm animals have received little attention. Psychological depravation in barren environments and isolation also needs scientific study. Croney, Gardner and Baggot go on to point out ethical issues involved in such study. For example, who should conduct such studies? They point out that animal scientists cannot retreat to a neutral environment separate from the “fallout of their research.” The authors also question the extent to which the animal-consuming public cares about the intelligence of farm animals. Cognitive dissonance is already apparent, for example, in the widespread acknowledgment of pig intelligence coupled with the lack of protest against intensive confinement of pigs. Unlike pets, farm animals are viewed as objects. It is not the difference in intelligence that governs the different treatment, but how we interact with them. An additional issue is the treatment of the animals themselves during the conduct of the research, and their disposal through euthanasia, adoption, etc. Is the animal scientist morally required to be an advocate for the animals he or she studies, or perhaps to seek employment elsewhere? In conclusion, Croney, Gardner and Baggot affirm the need for the study of the mental lives of farm animals in order for scientists and philosophers to develop reasonable and informed views of the moral status and appropriate treatment of farm animals.

David Fraser and Rod Preece’s essay “Animal Ethics and the Scientific Study of Animals” demonstrate that animal ethics exhibits an “enduring tension” between those who emphasize the similarities and those who emphasize the differences between humans and nonhuman animals. For example, Sextus Empiricus, Pythagorus, and Porphyry were opposed to thinkers such as Xenophon, the Stoics, and Marcus Aurelius. Later, St. Augustine took the Stoic side, whereas William Langland found animals to be kinder and more rational than humans. In the Renaissance Descartes
opposed Pierre Gassendi. A century later, Kant’s view was opposed by that of Goethe, who borrowed the categorical imperative to accommodate the interests of animals. Today Peter Singer, Tom Regan, and David DeGrazia propose that animals and humans should be treated with the same principles of equality, rights and justice. Peter Carruthers, Michael Leahy, and R. G. Frey articulate what they believe to be fundamental dissimilarities between humans and other species. Fraser and Preece note that throughout the history of these debates, philosophers have attempted both the ethical task of determining what moral principles are appropriate for application to animals, and the factual task of describing the mental attributes of animals. Today, these tasks are largely distinct, and consequently the attempts by ethicists to understand the mental attributes of animals are marked by three unproductive features. First, many ethicists make broad generalizations about very diverse taxonomic groups. Second, many claims are grounded only loosely on empirical observations. Third, philosophers disagree on what kind of methods would resolve their differences. In contrast, Fraser and Preece suggest an approach that uses findings from cognitive ethology in order to address questions such as the role of language in self-awareness and the criteria for use of the term “person.” In addition, philosophers can benefit from considerable recent research has on pain and discomfort in animals. (Fraser and Preece note that David DeGrazia, Bernard Rollin and to some degree James Rachels are among those who have made extensive use of such scientific literature.) In conclusion, Fraser and Preece call for a philosophically informed science and a scientifically informed philosophy.

In “Of Bears and Women” Sarah E. McFarland notes that many depictions of animals, including those of Barry Lopez, have developed from science, which objectifies what it studies. The scientific method translates reality into mathematical units. McFarland comments that Lopez recognizes the dangers of representation in this mathematical manner and tries to “evade” its implications, combining scientific information with observations as well as stories. Lopez also acknowledges the limits of our knowledge of animals. Yet much of his writing echoes other nature writing in contrasting the maleness of the ideal wild, independent creature with the “unquestioned position” of the adventurer. Specifically, in Arctic Dreams Lopez encounters a powerful male bear and experiences a genuine interaction with the “heroic, fierce, magnificently male bear.” In contrast, Lopez examines a female bear hit with a tranquilizer dart by the biologists with whom he is traveling. He examines the bear from the perspective of a scientist who desires measurements. She is unconscious, on display--a specimen. It is the bear’s vulva which catches Lopez’s attention; he describes the vulva as like that of all women. McFarland observes that while the typical male reader can perhaps identify with the hero writer, the feminist reader has no place in the scene. She is doubly excluded: first by the male bear as reinforcing masculinity as a universal human experience and second by the sight of the prostrate and unconscious female bear, forcing women readers to realize that universality is to be not female. Women are once again objects under the power of men, “both as readers and as people.” McFarland concludes with a call for our knowledge of bears to take the form of Lopez’ sensitive interaction with the male bear.

Dan Perry illustrates the tension between conservation biology and animal rights in “Animal Rights and Environmental Wrongs.” Conservation biology is concerned with species, populations, and ecosystems, not the individual animal. A basic aim of conservation biology is the protection of biodiversity; one of the greatest threats to biodiversity is the introduction of exotic or alien species. Such species cause extinctions of species all over the world, major ecological changes, and great economic damage. Perry provides a case study of the grey squirrel in Italy in order to illustrate the
complexities of dealing with an alien species. The American grey squirrel was first introduced into the Piermont area of Italy in 1948. Further introductions followed. Grey squirrels have the potential to fully replace native squirrel species throughout Eurasia. From 1989 several international organizations and scientists urged the eradication of the grey squirrel population. A trial eradication took place in 1997, shortly followed by law suits by animal rights groups. A three-year legal struggle ensued which caused the failure of the entire campaign. As of 2003 the eradication is no longer considered feasible due to the expansion of the range of the species. In evaluating this conflict, Perry notes that ignoring public opinion is counterproductive. A substantial part of the scientific community treats animal rights activists as a direct threat to wildlife conservation. When planning a policy, scientists often take economic and legal constraints into account but ignore moral and social considerations as biased, claiming that scientific evaluations are value-free. Yet the controversy regarding alien species within conservation biology indicates that this is not the case. Thus it is important for scientists to consult with experts in social science or moral philosophy in order to formulate and communicate plans more effectively. On the other hand, animals rights activists need to better understand the biology involved.

Niall Shanks and Keith Green in “Evolution and the Ethics of Animal Research” discuss the current use in the U.S. of between 14 and 16 million animals as experimental subjects serving as causal analogs to humans. They explain problems which arise from the known effects of allelic variation in humans with respect to drug metabolism, the problem of extrapolating from rats to mice and vice-versa, and the problems of extrapolation from rodents to humans (in studies of cancer and diabetes). They argue that the successful use of utilitarian arguments for animal experimentation requires that it be shown that each specific test involving certain harm to animals will have very probable benefits to humans and that the benefits could be obtained only by that means. The uncertainty of benefits makes utilitarian calculations impossible. Shanks and Green maintain that the general object of morality is to contribute to the extension of our sympathies beyond self-interest. If that is so, it is appropriate to extend our sympathies to nonhuman animals. The wide range of responses to pain as well as expressions of emotion found in both human and animals are language-like in that they lend themselves to interpretation. They partake of shared codes of meaning. The presumably unique human capacity to verbalize pain linguistically does not diminish this critical parallel. It follows that a failure of appropriate response to the appearance of animal pain is a failure of understanding. Since the rationale for using animals experimentally is to improve human lives, the discounting of animal suffering defeats the general object of morality: it involves bracketing responses to pain that are critical elements in human moral autonomy and flourishing. Shanks and Green conclude that currently only such procedures as testing certain surgical procedures on animals are morally justified, in that it is possible to reliably predict benefits to humans. Xenotransplation, if successful, might also be less morally troublesome than the use of animals as causal analogs to humans. Experiments without a demonstrably certain benefit due to the use of animals as causal analogs to humans cannot be justified by calculations of utility and in fact undercut the scientific enterprise itself.

**Analysis of Theories Associated with Prominent Philosophers**

Elisa Aaltola analyses three versions of altruism in “The Moral Value of Animals.” She notes that because contractualism as mutual benefit has been understood to exclude animals, possible duties to animals have often been made dependent on altruism. She identifies three versions of altruism. The
contemporary form of altruism which emphasizes benevolence to animals is found in the writings of writers such as Carl Cohen and John Rawls. The second form of altruism affirms that animals have value in themselves and is developed by thinkers such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan. Singer and Regan are “first-generation” theorists, who apply one or the other standard ethical theory to animals. The “second-generation” of theorists, such as S.F. Sapontzis, seek to include viewpoints from several theories. Aaltola describes the “third generation,” which criticizes theory in general. The third generation of thinkers emphasizes context as well as the role of emotion. The capacity to recognize the other being’s point of view leads not only to care but to identification. Examples of this approach are found in the writings of Martha Nussbaum, Bernard Williams, Mary Ann Warren, and Mary Midgley. Aaltola concludes by calling for a combination of the identification and contextuality found in the second approach with the theoretical frameworks found in the third approach to altruism.

In “Does Beast Suffering Count for Kant” Heike Baranzke provides a close reading of a portion of the *Doctrine of Virtue*, the only animal ethical text published by Kant. Baranzke maintains that the central idea is found in Kant’s doctrine of perfect duties to oneself. All human beings are endowed with the double structure of being an obligator and being obligated. Bodies can be objects of responsibility in the sense that a moral agent can obligate himself to take care of his own body or the physical needs of someone else. Relations of responsibility are asymmetrical, referred to by Kant as “duties with regard to something.” Kant affirmed that animals are “endowed with sensation and choice.” Animal nature is analogous to human nature with regard to physical and psychological interests. Baranzke argues that Kant articulates duties with regard to animal needs in the same manner as he deals with the duties of love with regard to human needs. Both are justified with reference to human dignity.

In “Hume and Our Treatment of Animals, “ Monica L. Gerrek focuses on “modified speciesism,” the bias in favor of animal species which are not exploited over those species which are exploited. Gerrek provides examples of this inconsistency, both in popular culture and in scientific research. She also argues that the moral theory of the eighteenth century Scottish philosopher David Hume condemns the exploitation of animals. Hume affirms that animals possess reason and emotions; in addition, for Hume animals experience sympathy, which underlies moral judgments. Because they lack the necessary understanding, animals do not have a sense of virtue and vice. Nevertheless, they warrant moral consideration because we can sympathize with animals when they are experiencing pain or pleasure. In addition, given that both humans and animals strive to avoid pain, we feel disapproval of those who inflict unnecessary pain and suffering on animals. She concludes that from a Humean perspective treating exploited animals in the way that we do is “morally reprehensible” because there are no morally relevant differences between exploited and unexploited animals.

Eli Kanon in “Can Animals Attain Membership Within a Human Social/Moral Group?” maintains that Emile Durkheim’s division of labor theory provides a foundation for providing limited rights to animals. By recognizing the role that animals play in our society we acknowledge our obligations to them. Kanon terms this “mechaorganic solidarity,” based on Durkheim’s view that society evolves from mechanical solidarity, in which social rules are concerned solely with survival, to organic solidarity, in which rules increase in number and complexity. Kanon maintains that animal social membership is one of serving as resources for humans. In addition, animals, as well as humans who lack higher functions, serve an indirect function by teaching fully functioning humans to be
benevolent. He concludes that rights and responsibilities are matters of degree.

The essay by Lisa Kretz (“Peter Carruthers and Brute Experience: Descartes Revisited”), presents a compelling critique of both the contemporary British philosopher Peter Carruthers and of the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes. In a careful consideration of Carruthers’ argument that non-human animals are nonconscious, Kretz points out the overlap between his view and Descartes’ position that non-human animals are automata. Kretz argues that the notion of a “nonconscious experience” is vacuous and that both Carruthers and Descartes use an overly limited notion of the sort of thinking required for consciousness. Kretz finds equivocations and circularity in these arguments. Moreover, their arguments violate common sense as well as scientific findings. She concludes with an expression of disbelief that writings such as those of Carruthers with its “overt and self-aggrandizing human bias” continue to be taken seriously by academics.

In “Beastly Contractarianism” C. Tucker and C. MacDonald argue that contractarianism can ground both the moral considerability of animals and animal rights. According to Tucker and MacDonald, contractarianism is at least as promising a theory as utilitarianism and is far more promising than the type of Kantianism developed by J. Baird Callicott. The explanation for the pessimistic view of animal moral status held by traditional contract theorists is that these theorists have failed to appreciate the metaphorical nature of the idea of a moral contract. According to Tucker and MacDonald, the language of contract is properly understood as highlighting the belief that subjective value is the ultimate underpinning of morality. Suggesting that animals cannot contract takes the metaphor much too seriously. In order for individuals to be parties to a contract, they must have the characteristics of potency, vulnerability, and responsiveness. The authors argue that many animals meet all three criteria. Tucker and MacDonald conclude with an enumeration of questions for later investigation.

As editor of this special issue, I wish to express my thanks to the contributors for their knowledge, insights, and commitment to the very important field of animal ethics. And may I suggest without hubris that a book I have recently co-edited may be of interest to readers seeking additional material: The Animal Ethics Reader, co-edited by Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). I also wish to thank Michael Goodman, General Editor of this journal, for his outstanding editorial work.

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