

A N I M A L I S S U E S

philosophical and ethical issues related to human/animal interactions

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ANIMAL ISSUES

The aim of this journal is to investigate philosophical and ethical issues related to human/animal interactions. Papers are invited on any topics within this general area.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

During the 1990's in Western culture a range of animal issues have become important. Some old ones have taken on a new urgency and some new questions have emerged. The key philosophical question in relation to non-human animals has been how are they distinct from humans. The criteria of sentience, reason, tool-making, language, free will and culture have all had their philosophical supporters. Yet the recent studies of free ranging apes and monkeys challenge all these criteria. The research on captive bonobos² dolphins³ and parrots⁴ has also raised questions about the uniqueness of language as a human trait. This has led some to argue that there is a need to re-define species boundaries or at least to re-think what it is that makes us human as distinct from animal. While others take the view that even embarking on the latter project is pointless and borne from human arrogance. Whatever one's position, the certainties in this area are gone.

The ethical questions stride into view with the growing awareness of the horrors of the expanding factory farm and as more young people turn to vegetarianism there is a need to clarify the moral basis beyond just an intuitive revulsion. The presentation of cannibalism as a theme in some recent films,⁵ and as a reality in some on-going wars also deserves comment.

Animal experimentation has been a source of concern for some time. The setting up of ethics committees in the last two decades may to some extent have dulled dissent. Yet this way of handling the ethical issues of experimentation does have its critics.⁶ Also there has been very little discussion of new techniques such as xenotransplantation and cloning. Xenotransplantation is the transplantation of organs or tissues between species, a procedure which is already in use and it is likely to expand given the promise of greater success with advances in breeding programs including the genetic engineering of animals, and immunology. The successful cloning of sheep and monkeys is said to point to an early date for the successful cloning of humans. There are some crying out for the discussion of ethical issues concerning human cloning but surely we need to consider these in relation to non-human animals too.

Vertebrate animals are usually the sole focus of ethical discussions of concerning animals in experimentation. Yet some Australian researchers,

working on coral in the Great Barrier Reef have suggested that invertebrate animals should also be considered.⁷

All of these ethical issues (and others such as zoos, pets and circuses) raise not only specific questions about the food industry, about eating, experimenting, teaching and recreation, but also the general question: what is the basis, if any, for the moral consideration of animals and how far does it extend? A range of new books have been published in this area and it will no doubt become a central philosophical concern in the future.

Another philosophical/ethical issue which has risen into prominence in the 1990's is the link between speciesism and sexism, a theme taken up by some of the writers in this issue, clearly negating the earlier feminist fear that expressing concern for animals might work to strengthen a woman/animal link and further denigrate women. Another issue is the connection or conflict between animal advocates and environmentalists or ecologists, an area which needs a great deal more work.

Submissions are invited on all of these areas, in fact any area of philosophical or ethical concern related to animals.

Notes

1. See for instance, Jane Goodall, *In the Shadow of Man*, Revised Edition (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1988); Dian Fossey, *Gorillas in the Mist* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1983) and Birute Galdikas, *Reflections of Eden* (Victor Gollancz, London, 1995) and Donald R. Griffin, *Animal Minds* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992).
2. Sue Savage-Rumbaugh and Roger Lewin, *Kanzi: The Ape at the Brink of the Human Mind* (Doubleday, London, 1994).
3. Louis Herman, 'Receptive Competencies in Language-Trained Animals' in J. Rosenblatt, et al, eds. *Advances in the study of behavior* (Academic Press, New York, 1987), pp.16-38.
4. I.M. Pepperberg, 'Referential Mapping: A Technique for Attaching Functional Significance to the Innovative Utterances of an African Gray Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*)', *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 11, (1990), pp.23-44.
5. For example, 'The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, Her Lover'.
6. See for instance, Denise Russell 'The Ethics of Animal Ethics Committees', *Proceedings of the Animals in Science Conference*, Monash University, 1995.

7. Paul Marshall, 'Ethics for invertebrates'. *ANZCCART News*, 9, 1996, p.6.