

# Book Reviews

*Dol, Marcel, Kasanmoentalib, Soemini, Lijmbach, Susanne, Rivas, Esterban, van den Bos, Ruud, editors, Animal Consciousness and Animal Ethics: Perspectives from the Netherlands, xii + 249pp., Van Gorcum, Assen, 1997.*

*Animal Consciousness and Animal Ethics* is a broad ranging collection of papers mainly from Dutch writers on the issue of animal consciousness and animal ethics. The prologue, written by Richard Burkhardt is on the founders of ethology and where they stood on the issue of animal subjectivity. The focus is on Tinbergen who expressed doubts about the possibility of an experimentally based study of this subjectivity, in contrast to Julian Huxley who favoured psychological explanations over physiological ones. Huxley experienced no difficulty in talking about the minds of animals.

Wim van der Steen tackles the concept of consciousness arguing that in fact there are many concepts here, depending on context. He contents that when trying to pin down the particular meaning it will be necessary to appeal to common sense, not just biology. While I can accept that it may be necessary to include mentalistic ideas in conceptions of consciousness, it is not necessary to equate those with 'commonsense', a very vague and variable notion. Consider for instance the commonsense view of witches in the sixteenth century. The need to go beyond biology is well-argued by van der Steen not only for ethology but for psychiatry, neuropsychology and psychoneuroimmunology. This discussion makes some fascinating links in the critique of these four disciplines.

JanVorstenbosch states that it 'is not possible to reach water-tight conclusions on whether animal consciousness exists on the basis of empirical evidence concerning animals' but he does not lead into this from an examination of the empirical evidence. Instead he stresses the lingering importance of Descartes' position. He makes many appeals to 'the scientific canon', yet this is a conception of science which has been strongly criticized in the last few decades. Vorstenbosch's more positive contribution is in the use of 'belief-policies' which give a basis for accepting a belief where there is no conclusive evidence. Moral considerations may enter here.

Monica Meijsing works on problems in defining consciousness rejecting notions linking consciousness with language (Dennitt, Rosenthal,

Searle). Her own account makes interesting use of certain ideas about perception linking it to self-awareness. Susanne Lijmbach draws on phenomenology to argue that there is a discontinuity between the animal and human experiential ability leading to an idea of animal pre-consciousness which differs from human consciousness.

Francoise Wemelsfelder takes on the intriguing position that it is not impossible to investigate an animal's point of view. In particular she asks, 'What is it like for an animal to spend its life in closely and chronically confined conditions?' She accepts that animals are capable of subjective, sentient experience but she does not seek identification with an animal's experience 'from within'. Nevertheless observation and understanding of this experience is still possible. Mechanistic accounts of experience and behaviour are rejected. For Wemelsfelder it is the expressive nature of behaviour which gives access to subjectivity whether in humans or other animals. Much attention is given to how this approach can be conceived of as scientific, and new scientific directions for research are proposed.

The articles in Part II take up various scientific issues related to animal consciousness, e.g. the common strategies for maintaining homeostasis in vertebrates; emotional behaviour in pigs; suffering and well-being across different species; the usefulness of control theory and cybernetics to study the experiences of animals or humans empirically.

The third part focuses on ethical issues and contains papers by two contributors to this edition of *Animal Issues*: Frans Brom and Henk Verhoog. Brom extends the discussion of animal welfare beyond questions of suffering into the capacities that an animal has to live a certain life. Verhoog (together with Thijs Visser) explores the idea of intrinsic value not based on animal consciousness. It is rewarding to read both these articles in conjunction with the two in this journal both of which take up more applied philosophical issues.

Other contributions to Part III engage with: problems in conventional theories of animal ethics (Estoban Rivas); a fascinating view of animal consciousness and ethics drawing on Lacan, Plessner and Levinas and describing Kant's position as 'a masterly move to exclude animal-protection for centuries from the agenda of ethics and law' (Tjard de Cock Buning); the idea about what matters to an animal and how that relates to ethics (F. Jan Grommers) and Rob de Vries gives a summary of Dutch research on animal consciousness and ethics.

This is an incredibly rich volume exploring many diverse directions and offering very fruitful ground for further research and reflection.

Denise Russell

*Vikka, Leena, The Intrinsic Value of Nature, xii + 168pp., Rodopi, Amsterdam, Atlanta, 1997.*

In *The Intrinsic Value of Nature*, Leena Vikka's approach to the subject of the relationship between humans and the non-human world is informed by both theory and practical experience. Apart from being a researcher at the Academy of Finland and university lecturer in Environmental Ethics, Vikka is active in affairs concerning the environment. She is chairperson of two Finnish organisations; the Wolf Group and Green Union for the Protection of Life.

*The Intrinsic Value of Nature* is a work which attempts to redress disparities within ethical theories and/or attitudes of contemporary humans regarding their relationship to other animals and to the natural world. In Vikka's opinion, the majority of philosophers and scientists are reluctant to apply 'the language of intrinsic value in the non-human world'. (p.3) Theories of value are underpinned by two questionable assumptions, namely: 1) human beings, of all living forms, are the only beings to have intrinsic value and 2) the source of all values is the human being.

Vikka proposes that nature itself has intrinsic value and that an ethical theory of the intrinsic value of nature could promote an attitude of respect for all forms of life, including the human (and other animals) and nature. Vikka's objective, 'the well-being of the people on Earth and the well-being of the Earth and its diverse life forms, plants and animals' (p.3) reflects the extent of her concern for the need of a more equitable system of values.

Following her analysis of the philosophy of nature-conservation in the light of the intrinsic value of nature, Vikka claims that a naturalistic, or naturocentric theory of value - one based on ethical extensionism and pluralism would alter the traditional anthropocentric perspective of the concepts of values and 'rights'. Vikka believes that if a naturocentric, rather than an anthropocentric theory of values is embraced, it will allow recognition of the fact that several kinds of intrinsic value exist. Furthermore, in view of the possibility of 'non-human entities' being

regarded as possessing intrinsic value, the term 'rights' could be reassessed to encompass the 'intrinsic rights of animals, of trees and plants, and even of mountains, and other ecosystems'. (p.119)

According to Vikka the 'value of life requires the right to live and flourish in each life-form' (p.120) but the intrinsic value of the ecosystem itself can only be realised (and is indeed necessitated) by the cessation of human activities which pollute the environment.

Elizabeth Steinmetz

*Sylwan, Peter et al, Transgenic animals - why?, 82 pp., Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen, 1998.*

*Transgenic animals - why?* is a publication from the Nordic Committee on Bioethics set up in 1989 to encourage collaboration on bioethical issues. Several of the papers deal with the science behind the development of transgenic animals. One chapter deals with commercial issues and one with legal matters. Four chapters focus on ethical issues and these will be highlighted here.

Peter Sylwan argues that the basic ethical questions raised by the development of transgenic animals exist in relation to gene manipulation through conventional breeding. He stresses that the latter has often been promoted simply 'for the excitement and joy of humans'. He extols the benefits of transgenics in furthering knowledge about the mechanisms of life and in providing valuable assistance to the Human Genome Project. He predicts that this area of science will vastly increase the need for research animals. Human ethical issues concerning risk in the creation of viruses or dangerous DNA sequences are acknowledged. No ethical concern for the transgenic animals is mentioned.

Svein Aage Christoffersen looks at the phrase 'man is playing God' that is often applied to genetic engineering and suggests different interpretations. He is concerned about unintended consequences of such engineering and urges caution. Christoffersen also takes up issues of animal ethics claiming that there are some limits to the human use (or abuse) of animals. He states that 'animals may be used for human benefit only when the result is of considerable importance to man', and then considers that requirement in the creation of transgenic farm animals. He does not believe that the goals here are significant enough to over-ride the pain and suffering of animals.

Christoffersen also presents an interesting account of why the creation of transgenic animals *does* lead us into different ethical issues from traditional breeding and he gives an unusual twist to the notion of 'playing God' interpreting it as 'to care'.

Birgitta Forsman begins with an outline of the main uses of transgenic animals. Then she considers issues of human and animal welfare arguing that although there may be some human benefits, there are possible dangers or disadvantages for humans. Forsman then canvasses some contemporary approaches to animal ethics, pointing out their limitations. There is some specific discussion of the oncomouse. In general, Forsman says that there can be no 'yes' or 'no' response to the development of transgenic animals rather we need to consider the interests of animals as well as human welfare. She supports the view that 'All interests should be considered equally' but she does not take that to mean that every being possessing interests has an equal moral status.

Ritta Salmi defends a notion of animal rights and in particular she claims that animal welfare legislation implies that animals have a right not to be caused to suffer by humans. Such legislation implies that animals are not just our property or tools. Yet as Salmi points out, there is a huge inconsistency in the legislation. While acknowledging that animals have a right to live free from human-inflicted pain it allows that animals may be caused severe pain in some circumstances e.g. in intensive food production or experimental research. Salmi queries whether the causing of pain to animals can be justified for any other purpose than the benefit to the animal itself.

Salmi resists the move to equate genetic modification with traditional breeding and argues that the former gives rise to many causes of concern, quite a few of which are detailed.

In the last three articles different views are expressed on the intrinsic value of animals, the importance of species integrity and the likely medical benefits of transgenetic research. (They agree that the use of transgenic animals as farm animals is highly problematic.) However taken together they give a useful base for thinking about a diversity of ethical problems raised by the development of transgenic animals.

Denise Russell



# Book Notes

**Taylor, Victoria J. and Dunstone, Nigel, editors, *The Exploitation of Mammal Populations*, xx + 415, Chapman & Hall, London, 1996.**

This is a depressing yet important book outlining the myriad of ways mammals are exploited or 'sustainably used'. It covers the fur trade, whaling, hunting for food or sport and ecotourism as well as other topics. General issues of a historical and conceptual nature are explored. There are 22 authors mainly from Britain. The chapters were originally papers at a conference jointly organized by the Universities' Federation for Animal Welfare and the Mammal Society.

**Donovan, Josephine and Adams, Carol J. editors, *Beyond Animal Rights: A feminist caring ethic for the treatment of animals*, 216pp, Continuum, New York, 1996.**

*Beyond Animal Rights* contains a collection of articles pointing out the limitations of an animal ethics which depends on a rights-based framework. The idea of an ethics of care which Carol Gilligan elaborated in the book, *In a Different Voice* in relation to humans only, is taken up here to work out how we can ground animal ethics appealing to an ethics of care. The individual contributors are Marti Kheel, Josephine Donovan, Deane Curtin, Brian Luke, Rita C. Manning, Kenneth Shapiro and Carol, J. Adams. A useful biography on these issues is included.

**McElroy, Susan Chernak, *Animals as Teachers and Healers*, xviii + 252pp, Rider, London, 1996.**

*Animals as Teachers and Healers* unashamedly reflects Susan Chernak McElroy's love of animals. This comes out in her accounts of the companionship of dogs and the remarkable powers of cats and dolphins to help sick humans. She discusses animals as guardians and guides and interactions with wild animals. Most of the accounts are personal stories and it is the personal relationship with particular animals which grounds an implicit ethics of respect for other species.

**Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff, *Dogs Never Lie About Love: Reflections on the Emotional World of Dogs*, 240pp., Jonathan Cape, London, 1997.**

The main theme of *Dogs Never Lie About Love* is that the reason why humans and dogs have such an intense relationship is that there is a mutual ability to understand one another's emotional responses.

Masson illustrates this with numerous anecdotes and reports of emotions in dogs including forgiveness, friendliness, love (or even 'hyperlove'), joy, loyalty, gratitude, loneliness, compassion, dignity, humiliation and disappointment, sadness and abandonment. This shows fairly convincingly humans' ability to understand dogs but we are not told how or even whether dogs understand human emotional responses. Given that we can lie about love this perhaps destroys the mutuality of Masson's thesis.

The book contains some wonderful stories about dogs, written in a dashing style and is quite informative on dog behaviour. There is also a chapter on dogs' sense of smell, their relations of dominance and submission, a perceptive discussion of dogs at play, and the sameness and difference between dogs and wolves. There is a rather inconclusive chapter on aggression, and a short but informative discussion of the senses of dogs (in addition to smell).

There is some rhetoric which could be taken as amusing or irritating, probably depending on the strength of one's love of dogs: e.g. 'Questers of the truth, that's who dogs are; seekers after the invisible scent of another being's authentic core'; 'the dog *is* love', 'they [dogs] live in a whole world of feeling. One might even say a dog *is* feeling' and 'dogs *are* pure emotion'.

**Wynne-Tyson, Jon, *Anything within reason*, 191pp., Oakroyd Press, Hertfordshire, England, 1994.**

The battle between reason and emotion is played out in a wry literary exploration of the ethics of eating animals, people and plants. *Anything within reason* provokes new ways of thinking about many of these issues that would be difficult to present in theoretical argument precisely because the value of rationality is also challenged. There are touches of Virginia Woolf and George Orwell here.



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