BOOK REVIEWS


What does it mean to love a dog?

Marjorie Garber, Director of the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies at Harvard, and best known for her cultural studies of bisexuality and cross-dressing, has mobilised her analytical talents and undertaken an enormous and illuminating project: a literary and popular investigation of our relationship to and love for dogs.

*Dog Love* is an overview of our historical, literary and cultural preoccupation with dogs: from the history of breeding, to criminal and rescue dogs; psychoanalysis and dogs (including Freud's dogs) to the new, popular literary anthropomorphism; Dylan Thomas' *The Portrait of the Dog as a Young Artist* to television's Lassie; writers' dogs to academics' dogs (and their dogs' names); talking dogs to bestiality; petimony (and pooper scoopers) to DNA cloning; a dog's grief to dog loss. Yet despite its scope (or perhaps because of it), Garber manages to open up many important philosophical and ethical issues, suggesting a range of areas for further theoretical analysis.

Having owned my very first dog (Hilda Doolittle, a kelpie named after the poet) for two years now, this book celebrated my new-found dog love, while posing questions I had only recently asked myself: What does it mean that I fantasise about speaking with my dog? (or more truthfully, fantasise about becoming-dog?) Is a dog an agent in itself or merely an extension of its human owner in relation to the law? Who is responsible for the damage a dog may do? What does the increasing jurisdiction around dogs and the corresponding fight for dog-rights reflect? Do puppies have mirror-phases, as Lacan suggests human children do? (I am sure I caught my dog 'stuck' in the mirror once.) Can a dog contemplate; can she be a philosopher? (One morning when I refused to get up, I let Hilda outside to wait for me. From my bedroom window I watched her sitting exceptionally still in the middle of the garden, her nose up, just
smelling the air - I imagined - and watching/listening to the birds. She remained that way for a good twenty minutes.) Why is it easier sometimes to love my dog than my lover? Do dogs have souls?

While always contemplative, *Dog Love* is also a collection of real-life and fictional-life (dog biography and autobiography) accounts of dog-human relationships, and the emotional, psychological, sometimes sexual and often financial investments we make in them.

It is unbelievable as the dog who arrived to meet his owner at the subway station every day for nine years after his owner had died, waiting at the station until midnight, only to return the next day;

funny as Shady Spring Kennels in Maryland which offers: '...dog-paddling, Frisbee and hiking, a Bark-and-Ride camp bus, a camp spa with hairdo and pedicure, and bunk photographs for the proud parents to take home'; dog superstores and dog psychiatrists;

disturbing and politically relevant as the tale of the pit-bull from notoriously racist Virginia who was in need of rescue from legal 'execution' for being a dangerous dog; and his black owner who believed he could save him by explaining to the court that: 'All the ladies in the neighborhood like him. Not just the colored ladies. The white ladies too';

and wise as Virginia Woolf's account of a Robert Browning's dog Flush after a haircut: 'What am I now? he thought, gazing into the glass. And the glass replied with the brutal sincerity of glasses, "You are nothing." He was nobody. Certainly he was no longer a cocker spaniel. But as he gazed, his ears bald now, and uncurled, seemed to twitch. It was as if the potent spirits of truth and laughter were whispering in them. To be nothing-is that not, after all, the most satisfactory state in the whole world?'

Touching, smart, extensive and difficult to put down, this book should be read by anybody who loves a dog and certainly by those interested in the ethical and philosophical nature of dog-human relationships.
Is DeGrazia a sophisticated Singer? This thought arose early in reading this book and hovered until the end. There is an attempt to build up a different philosophy of moral respect for animals but when the practical implications are detailed, it seems that utilitarian currents remain. For example, in discussing the issue of the justification of zoos for their entertainment value, DeGrazia says 'Entertainment is simply not a serious enough benefit to justify such harms [i.e. the harms of confinement, etc.].'

This may be a very unfair reading of the book which has many marvellous features. In defending a coherence model of ethical justification, DeGrazia puts forward a series of norms which the model must conform to: argumentative support, global illumination (a coherent system must hang together and the system must explain how the parts hang together), simplicity, clarity, plausibility, compatibility (or coherence) with whatever else we know or reasonably believe. This is an interesting list reminiscent of Kuhn's attempt to ground a position on the justification of scientific theories See T.S. Kuhn, 'Objectivity, Value Judgment and Theory Choice' in The Essential Tension (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977). DeGrazia goes on to state that fallibilistic and contextual judgements about these norms constitute a type of objectivity. This, I think, stretches the meaning of objectivity too much but one could allow for a high level of consensus on such norms while denying there is any objectivity here. In support of his coherence theory, DeGrazia says that 'an incoherent opinion, position, or theory is not reasonable; it does not make sense' (page 18). This is a problematic claim. There is equivocation on 'incoherent'. If he means by 'incoherent', a position which violates his theoretical norms such a position could still make sense. If he means 'nonsense' by the term 'incoherent' then of course an incoherent position does not make sense but this is not the same as saying that the position violates his theoretical norms.
In addition, DeGrazia defends 'a modified notion of impartiality or universalizability recognizing feminist and other criticisms of this notion'. He doesn't handle these criticisms entirely satisfactorily. In response to writers such as Gilligan who suggest that care may be a higher value than impartiality at least for some people, DeGrazia says that he isn't arguing that the care perspective is invalid just that it is insufficient. There is still a conflict with Gilligan. Her arguments have not been met. Also in the statement of the universalizability principle which DeGrazia accepts it is not clear how these criticisms have been recognized: 'Universalizability and formal justice imply that we should grant equal moral weight or importance to everyone's (relevantly similar) interests, unless there is a relevant difference between the beings in question'. Perhaps if more work is done on the notion of 'relevant difference' a possible resolution of this debate might emerge.

DeGrazia makes a further move in Chapter 3 arguing that the theoretical virtues of the coherence model favour equal consideration of animals. There is careful exploration of what this might mean. Chapters 4 to 6 deal with the mental life of animals as DeGrazia believes this study is necessary to determine which animals have 'basic moral status' and whether there are morally significant differences among beings with moral status. In these chapters he draws on human phenomenology, research in animal behaviour, functional-evolutionary arguments and physiological evidence. Human phenomenology is discussed as DeGrazia believes that we have good reason to think that many animals have minds whose contents are not wholly dissimilar to the contents of human minds. He states that human phenomenology sets the agenda for what kinds of mental states to look for in animals, a human-centred approach with obvious plausibility. Nevertheless I think that we should be open to the possibility that there are animal mental states which are different from human ones which could be a basis for according moral status.

The appropriateness of using the other three types of evidence is given a strong defence. For DeGrazia, taking animals seriously requires taking their minds seriously. So it is necessary to consider the empirical data on animal minds. An excellent summary of this data follows. It points to the
following conclusions amongst others: that we can attribute pain and consciousness generally to most or all vertebrates and probably at least some invertebrates, e.g. cephalopods; (consciousness is accepted as a sufficient but not necessary condition for mentation and it is distinguished from self-consciousness) and we can attribute anxiety, fear, suffering and pleasure to most or all vertebrates and possibly a few invertebrates. Most or all vertebrates can think. Some animals have a sense of time and grizzly bears, Great apes, lesser apes, elephants and dolphins have self-awareness. After a careful exploration of what it is that constitutes language, DeGrazia concludes that dolphins and sea lions can master certain syntactic and semantic rules. Chimpanzees, bonobos and gorillas have a range of linguistic capacities. He then draws the general conclusion that 'some apes and cetaceans have used, and many of their conspecifics can do doubt learn, certain forms of language'.

DeGrazia provides a short but convincing argument for the claim that at least some animals are moral agents, a quite novel position but one that is receiving some empirical support.

The principle of equal consideration defended requires that equal moral weight be given to relevantly similar interests. After surveying standard forms of value theory for humans, DeGrazia supports a subjectivist position. He argues that all and only sentient beings have interests (based on his coherence theory). There is an extended discussion of the possible harm of death to animals, an issue which is generally not given enough attention. Although his conclusion is tentative he agrees that 'normal humans who are not thoroughly miserable and hopeless lose more from dying than do many animals with moral status (at least from fish through birds).'

The principle of equal consideration requires that equal moral weight or importance be given to relevantly similar interests no matter who has them. Some implications of this principle are: a prima facie duty not to do harm to sentient beings; and a duty not to kill, disable or confine sentient animals unnecessarily. Some further practical consequences include a condemnation of factory farming, fishing, and the practices in most zoos as ethically indefensible.
I would like to see more argument on the point that it is only sentient beings who have interests and deserve moral consideration. It is easy to say along with DeGrazia that nonsentient animals, species or ecosystems don't have 'relevantly similar interests' but why then do I feel a moral repugnance at the devastation currently being visited upon coral reefs or native forests around the world? Is this simply misplaced?

There are some curious omissions in this book. Ted Benton's *Natural Relations* is not mentioned. Nor is the work of Greta Gaard, Lori Gruen or Linda Birke. There is almost no discussion of animal experimentation which is very odd given the strong defence of vegetarianism. However *Taking Animal Seriously* does contain a wealth of well-worked out discussion on an impressively wide range of issues in animal ethics. It would make an excellent text for a course in this area.

Denise Russell
BOOK NOTES


Many of the chapters in this book have been in the public domain for a few years as conference papers, journal articles or lectures but they still constitute a fresh Christian perspective on animals, confronting the view often read into Christianity that animals are in the world for human use. The first part of the book is about establishing Christian principles which relate to animals. These principles turn out to imply some direct moral duties. The second half of *Animal Theology* contains an elaboration of these principles. Vegetarianism is defended. Animal experimentation, hunting and genetic engineering are all condemned with arguments which work well given Linzey's basic assumptions but they don't engage with the challenges of different views a great deal.


*Between Pets and People* is a report of the research which Beck and Katcher conducted on human-pet interactions. They used techniques developed by ethologists to study animals in the wild to observe people and pets in parks, homes and clinic waiting rooms. They also used physiological measurement, e.g. of blood pressure and some epidemiology of health and disease. The main research was done prior to 1983 when the first edition came out. There have been some new additions. The book is not very technical. In fact the style is conversational. Some accounts are fascinating but many readers will wish for more depth.


'Mind' here is taken to refer to 'that range of capacities, states and processes which constitute the living experience of a creature' or the animal's point of view on the world. No mental entity is posited. Debates
in the animal sciences concerning the subjective experiences of animals are outlined followed by a quick run-through of various philosophical theories of mind. There is an attempt to defuse the problem of anthropomorphism and to tackle the problem of how it is that we can ascribe psychological concepts to non-language using animals. The concept of expression is employed. *Can we understand animal minds* is a good, fast read. This is also not a 'deep' book but it does present some fresh insights and neatly cuts off many dead ends in philosophy of mind.


Groves is not offering a new moral theory from which we can draw conclusions concerning ethics and animal experimentation. His aim is to describe how certain people feel about such research and their reflections on these feelings. The people in the study are from a 'mid-size college town' in the United States. They are animal rights activists and animal research supporters. It is probably fair to say the sample is representative of activists and research supporters in other Western countries. *Hearts and Minds* does highlight the complexity of attitudes and feelings on both sides of this divide. Yet Groves thinks that the two groups are not as different as they have been made out to be with regards to their feelings about animals.

The final chapter contains a discussion of the problems with federal and institutional guidelines for laboratory animal welfare. This is certainly an area which needs much more consideration along with the broader questions concerning regulation of animal research and promotion of alternatives. The existence of institutional guidelines and ethics committees often leads to unwarranted complacency.
Announcements

The Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare will be published by Greenwood Press and it is tentatively scheduled for release in early 1998. Edited by Marc Bekoff of the University of Colorado this one volume reference work will provide essays from recognized authorities in the field addressing the many issues of animal rights and animal welfare. The forward is written by Jane Goodall. For more information contact Marc Bekoff, EPO Biology, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 80309-0334, U.S.A. email: marc.bekoff@colorado.edu