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Ethics and Animals

In this fresh and comprehensive introduction to animal ethics, Lori Gruen weaves together poignant and provocative case studies with discussions of ethical theory, urging readers to engage critically and to reflect empathetically on our treatment of other animals. In clear and accessible language, Gruen provides a survey of the issues central to human–animal relations and a reasoned new perspective on current key debates in the field. She analyzes and explains a range of theoretical positions and poses challenging questions that directly encourage readers to hone their ethical-reasoning skills and to develop a defensible position about their own practices. Her book will be an invaluable resource for students in a wide range of disciplines, including ethics, environmental studies, veterinary science, women's studies, and the emerging field of animal studies, and is an engaging account of the subject for general readers with no prior background in philosophy.

LORI GRUEN teaches Philosophy and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, where she also directs the Ethics in Society Project. She has published widely on topics in practical ethics and animal ethics.

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An Introduction

LORI GRUEN
Wesleyan University

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521888998

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First published 2011
6th printing 2014

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data
Gruen, Lori.
Ethics and animals : an introduction / Lori Gruen.
p. cm. – (Cambridge applied ethics)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-521-88899-8
1. Animal welfare – Moral and ethical aspects. 2. Animal rights. I. Title.
HV4708.G78 2011
179′.3 – dc22 2010041515

ISBN 978-0-521-88899-8 Hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-71773-1 Paperback

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For Maggie

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Acknowledgments

It is through my own early exposure to animal ethics that I started to think seriously about pursuing philosophy professionally. I owe a great deal of thanks to my original teachers, who are now dear friends – Dale Jamieson and Peter Singer. My path to becoming a philosopher was punctuated by a decision to try to change attitudes about animals directly. I left graduate school during the early days of the animal rights movement and spent a number of years organizing against various forms of animal exploitation, becoming involved in exciting activist campaigns. I worked shoulder to shoulder with some incredible, inspiring people, too many to list here, but I particularly want to thank Chas Chiodo, Ken Knowles, and Vicki Miller. Over the years I have had the great pleasure to work with people who have devoted themselves to caring for animals, and in addition to allowing me to get my hands dirty they have also helped me to understand animals' interests better. I am particularly indebted to Linda Brent and Amy Fultz at Chimp Haven in Keithville, Louisiana and Patti Ragan at the Center for Great Apes in Wachula, Florida.

I have presented some of the ideas that are discussed in this book in many different places over the years. I thank audiences at Princeton University, Yale Law School, and Wellesley College for talking through some of the ideas in Chapters 1, 2, and 5 with me. I have taught animal ethics in my classes at five different universities and colleges and I am grateful to all of the students on those courses. Special thanks are owed to the students in my Humans–Animals–Nature classes at Wesleyan University in the spring 2008 and the fall 2009 with whom I worked through the material that became this book. They will undoubtedly see their objections and concerns in these pages. Special thanks to Micah Fearing, Dan Fischer, Megan Hughes, Mark Lee, and Dan Schniedewind for specific comments on some of the chapters. Thanks to Mollie Laffin-Rose for research assistance and Tyler Wuthmann for help with references. My friends at Wesleyan University in Middletown and Fresh Yoga

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in New Haven have provided very different, but much appreciated, support. I am so thankful to Hilary Gaskin of Cambridge University Press for seeing the need for this book and keeping me on track. I am particularly indebted to Valerie Tiberius, J. D. Walker, Kristen Olsen, and especially Robert C. Jones for providing me with detailed feedback on earlier drafts of the chapters that follow.

My deepest gratitude goes to the individual animals who have inspired, amused, and comforted me and with whom I have had rich and life-altering relationships – my late feline companions Tootie, Jason, Jeremy, Camus, and the inimical Eldridge Recatsner; my late canine companions Dooley and Buddy; and my special chimpanzee friends living in sanctuary at Chimp Haven: Sarah, Sheba, Emma, Harper, Ivy, Keeli, and Darrell. Darrell and Buddy passed away while I was writing this book, but remembering their strong personalities and courage kept me going. My beloved canine companion Maggie and her dog Fuzzy have been by my side (more accurately, at my feet) as I have been working away at the computer. Maggie was particularly tolerant of my stress as the deadline for submitting the book approached. She has helped me through many losses and challenges; her loyalty and care for me is a model of virtuous ethical attention. I dedicate this book to her.

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Abbreviations

AETA	Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act
ALF	Animal Liberation Front
AMC	Argument from Marginal Cases
ASL	American Sign Language
AWA	Animal Welfare Act
AZA	Association of Zoos and Aquariums
CAFO	concentrated animal feeding operation
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HSUS	Humane Society of the United States
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MRSA	methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*
NSUT	non-speciesist utilitarian test
PETA	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
SCIs	spinal cord injuries
SHAC	Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty
ToM	theory of mind
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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Preface

Explorations of our ethical relations to other animals go back to antiquity, but it wasn't until the 1970s, in the wake of social justice struggles for racial and gender equality, that animal ethics was taken up seriously by philosophers and other theorists and the modern animal rights movement was born. When I first started working on animal ethics it was still somewhat on the fringe of both the academy and society more generally, so it is really exciting for me to see a whole academic field emerge, called "animal studies," and to watch animal ethics become more mainstream. So much theoretical work has been done in the last ten or so years, that I think it is safe to say we are now in the "second wave" of animal ethics.

Introductory texts should try to present all reasonable sides of an issue and I believe I have done that in the pages that follow. However, because I have been thinking, writing, and teaching about animal ethics for over two decades I have well-worked-out views on the issues I present in this book and, as I tell my students, it would be disingenuous to pretend otherwise, so I do not try to hide my considered judgments. My commitment is obvious – other animals deserve our moral attention and their lives matter – and this is the perspective that shapes this book. I do not take one particular philosophical position and explore it in depth in this volume, however. Rather, given that there are competing ethical issues in play and many conflicts of values that are not obviously or readily resolvable, I try to highlight the ethical complexity of our interactions with and obligations to other animals as well as to point to some of the limitations of popular ethical approaches. Even among those who believe that animals matter, there is disagreement. I have explored some of the disagreement within animal ethics here, but of course I couldn't cover everything. Many will disagree with the arguments I present, but one of my goals is to provide readers with enough arguments and information to help them to develop their own views that they then feel confident defending.

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There is a tendency in almost any ethical discussion to flatten out or oversimplify opposing views and to caricature opponents. This is certainly the case in discussions of animal ethics. For example, those opposed to research on animals often think that all of those who use animals for scientific purposes are insensitive to animals and to animal rights advocates. I have found this isn't true. Similarly, zoo advocates tend to lump everyone who opposes captivity together – as radicals who would rather all animals become extinct than subject them to imprisonment. I have found this isn't true either. It's a lot simpler to think of things as strictly dichotomous; it certainly is a lot simpler to write as if that is so, and I'm afraid I do sometimes oversimplify theoretical positions, particularly when I am trying to make a philosophical point as precisely as possible. But, in reality, most positions are much more nuanced and the people who hold various positions about animals fall along a spectrum. And, people's attitudes about other animals are not always consistent. I have friends who have dedicated their lives to protecting and rescuing some animals who also eat other animals. I know vegetarians who experiment on animals and vegans who support regularly killing animals in certain contexts. This variety makes teaching animal ethics particularly interesting. Unlike many philosophical topics, we are all implicated in the practices that I examine in this book.

I have organized the book in a way that I think is both accessible to the interested reader and helpful to those who would like to use this book in the classroom. Each chapter starts with a vignette that raises some of the ethical issues that will be explored in the chapter. I think it is particularly important in teaching and thinking about ethics that we don't allow theory to get too far removed from practice. Information about real-world ethical problems should shape our philosophical reflections, so I often seek out expert (non-philosophical) insights and knowledge about practices. Philosopher Henry Sidgwick said it best, I think:

> Our aim is to frame an ideal of the good life . . . and to do this satisfactorily and completely we must have adequate knowledge of the conditions of this life in all the bewildering complexity and variety in which it is actually being lived . . . we can only do this by a comprehensive and varied knowledge of the actual opportunities and limitations, the actual needs and temptations, the actually constraining customs and habits, desires, and fears . . . and this knowledge a philosopher – whose personal experience is often very limited – cannot adequately attain unless he earnestly avails himself of

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> opportunities of learning from the experiences of [others] . . . the philosopher's practical judgment on particular problems is likely to be untrustworthy, unless it is aided and controlled by the practical judgment of others who are not philosophers.[1]

I have sought out information and "practical judgment" right up to the last minute, to keep the discussion as up to date as possible. I have also included my own experiences working with animals and the insights of people who are involved in many different aspects of the issues discussed here – e.g., those who work in labs, those who work at zoos, those who oppose the use of animals in labs, those who oppose zoos, those who care directly for animals in shelters and sanctuaries, those who study animals in the wild.

If this book is to be used as a textbook, the chapters lend themselves to being taught in quite different ways, depending on the nature of the course and the interests of the instructor. The first two chapters present the ethical arguments that are at the heart of discussions about the extent and nature of our obligations to other animals. Though these chapters are self-contained, teachers may wish to supplement these chapters with texts that explore the history of ethics, topics in animal cognition, comparative psychology, philosophy of biology, disability studies, or texts that directly challenge anthropocentrism. The remaining chapters allow for similar supplementation depending on the instructor's interest. Chapter 3 would lend itself to a larger discussion of the ethics of killing or the philosophy of food. In Chapter 4 I only touch briefly on the topic of pain, on which a great deal of interesting philosophical and scientific work has been done; veterinary medicine also has much to contribute here. There are also topics in the history and philosophy of science into which this chapter provides an entrée. Chapter 5 might be supplemented with more in-depth discussions of autonomy, political philosophy, or topics in the philosophy of mind. Chapter 6 could be the basis for a nice module on environmental philosophy and conservation biology. Chapter 7 deals with animal activism, and there is much more that might be said about legal protection for other animals as well as the relation of animal activism to other forms of social justice activism. Of course, these are just suggestions; I hope that the book is useful to those teaching animal studies from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives.

[1] Sidgwick 1998: 20–1.

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I need to make a few comments about terminology. The term "animal" has been contested as it is used in very different ways. Often it is meant to exclude humans, but, of course, humans are animals. The term is so vast, it contains so many different organisms, that it is sometimes too general a term to be very useful. To be more specific, sometimes writers, including myself, use "non-human animal" to refer to other animals. Some argue that this sets humans above other animals. To rectify this, sometimes people use the term "other than human animals," but this is rather bulky. I use "other animals" as often as makes sense. I also use "non-human animals" and just "animals" sometimes too.

Some philosophers separate the "ethical" from the "moral." I use these terms interchangeably here.

I also want to bring to your attention my use of pronouns. In gender studies, pronoun use is a particularly important topic, as the use of gender-neutral and gender-inclusive pronouns, or, more precisely, the lack of their use, have implications beyond grammar. In animals studies, the struggle is moving from "it," which refers to inanimate objects, to "he" or "she." It is tricky when it isn't clear what sex the particular individual to whom I am referring is, so sometimes I will refer to an animal whose sex I don't know as "he," sometimes as "she." Speaking of "whom," my spellcheck constantly reminds me of the error of my pronoun use in sentences in which I referred to animals as "who" rather than "that." I ignored the spellcheck.

Although I have been thinking and working on the topics I present here for many years, at times, working on this book made me very sad. We humans have done unnecessary and incredibly cruel things to other animals. While reviewing the history of animal experimentation and zoos, evaluating the current state of animal agriculture, reporting on the bushmeat crisis and rates of extinction, it occasionally felt that ethical discussion could barely scratch the surface of our entrenched callous practices, and the task of changing such practices often seems insurmountable. But, being in the presence of other animals, experiencing their incredible capacities for forgiveness, knowing remarkable people who spend their lives improving animal lives, and working with students who are eager to try to make a difference, gives me hope. Part of my hope is that this book will help readers to rethink their relationships with other animals and perhaps move you to do one thing, every day, to make the world better for all animals, human and non-human.

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