

Ethics and Animals

Second Edition

In this comprehensive updated introduction to animal ethics, Lori Gruen weaves together poignant and provocative case studies with discussions of ethical theory, urging readers to engage critically and reflect empathetically on our relationships with other animals. In clear and accessible language, Gruen discusses a range of issues central to human–animal relations and offers a reasoned new perspective on key debates in the field. She analyses 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, gender studies, and the emerging field of animal studies, and is an engaging account of animal ethics for readers with no prior background in philosophy.

LORI GRUEN is William Griffin Professor of Philosophy at Wesleyan University. She is the author and editor of eleven books, including *The Ethics of Captivity* (2014), *Entangled Empathy* (2015), and *Critical Terms for Animal Studies* (2018).

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An Introduction

Second Edition

LORI GRUEN

Wesleyan University



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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 twenty years, that I think it is safe to say that animal ethics is now an established subdiscipline.

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 three 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 commitments are obvious – other animals deserve our moral attention and concern 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 are robust disagreements. I have explored some of the disagreement within the animal ethics literature here and have updated some of these debates, but still 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 develop their own views that they then feel confident defending.

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. On top of that, 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 animal shelters. 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 or two 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.

In this edition, I have updated and added information that is central to understanding the ethical issues raised by our relationships with animals. I have also included new arguments and approaches that have developed since the first edition was published in 2011. I still rely on my own experiences working with animals, which have expanded, as well as the insights of people who are involved in many different aspects of the issues discussed

here – for example, 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; and 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. Chapters 1 and 2 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 them 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, the philosophy of food, and animal agriculture's impact on climate change. 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 the relation of animal activism to other forms of social justice activism, but I'm confident that this is a good start for that discussion. I hope that the book may also be useful to those teaching animal law and animal studies from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives.

I'd like 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. And the term "human" is not as straightforward as it may appear, as I discuss in Chapter 2. The term "animal" 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 "nonhuman 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 “nonhuman animals” and just “animals” sometimes too.

Some philosophers separate the “ethical” from the “moral.” I use these terms interchangeably here. Often people use the word “ethics” as if it contains a particular prescription. For example, sometimes people equate animal ethics with animal liberation or veganism. Here you will find a variety of ethical positions that pertain to our complex relationships with other animals. In other words, there is no single, uniformly agreed-to ethical position about how to think about and engage with other animals.

I also want to bring to your attention my use of pronouns. In the first edition to the volume I noted that pronoun use is a particularly important topic in gender studies and in the world, as it impacts people who don’t neatly fit into a gender binary. But in moving from referring to animals as “it,” a pronoun that refers to inanimate objects, I used binary pronouns, “he” or “she.” I recognize this move may be seen to reinforce the sex/gender binary. It is an imposition of human binary sex/gender categories onto animals, and we aren’t clear how, if at all, animals themselves experience gender. Joan Roughgarden, an evolutionary biologist, wrote a book called *Evolution’s Rainbow* in which she provides an account of the animal kingdom (including human animals) as containing sex changers, species with three or more genders, and reproductive and family relations that involve more than just a traditional “father” and “mother.” As she writes, “The rainbow always has more colors than society has categories.”¹ Instead of just using “he” or “she” to refer to animals, I will also use “they,” for both singular and multiple animals.

Although I have been thinking and working on the topics I present here for decades, there are times when thinking hard about our vexed relationships with other animals makes 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, and 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

¹ Roughgarden 2013: 396.

remarkable people who spend their lives improving animal lives, and working with students who are eager to try to make a difference allows me to see that it is possible to reimagine our relationships with animals. In reading this book, I dearly hope that you might be moved to do one thing, every day, to make the world better for all animals, human and nonhuman.

Acknowledgments (for the second edition)

Since writing the first edition of this book, animal ethics and the new field of animal studies have really grown. I have met so many students, scholars, and activists around the globe who are thinking and acting in creative ways to try to imagine a more just and compassionate world for all animals, us included. They truly inspire me. I have also had the great honor of spending more time with animals and the people who create sanctuary for them, in addition to my dear friends, chimps and humans, at Chimp Haven, I am grateful to be a part of the extended VINE community. I thank these sanctuaries and the others I have visited for allowing me to be a small part of their crucial work. I also want to thank Carol Adams, Alice Crary, Robin Dembroff, Amy Fultz, Matthew Garrett, Katie Gillespie, Winfield Goodwin, pattrice jones, Axelle Karera, Claire Jean Kim, Timothy Pachirat, Fiona Probyn-Rapsey, Mary Jane Rubenstein, and Margot Weiss for engaging conversations about the topics I discuss in this edition and so much more. My very deep gratitude also goes to my editor, Hilary Gaskin, for her patience and support.

I'm delighted to be accompanied during the writing of this edition by three amusing canines, Taz, Zinnia, and Eli. I so appreciate their company. One of the difficulties of developing deep relationships with other animals is that their lives tend to be much shorter than our own. Many of the animals who have changed my life have now passed on. Maggie, to whom the first edition of this book was dedicated, passed away in 2014 and our companion Fuzzy died the year before. I've also deeply mourned the deaths of Tailor, Dave, Toby, Scotty, Rocky, and my beloved chimpanzee friend Sarah, who you can see on the cover of this edition. I thank Amy Fultz for permission to use this photo of Sarah. One thing that helps me cope with these losses is

knowing that they each lived, at least part of their lives, having fun, meaningful relationships . I dedicate this edition to all the animals who don’t have a chance to live well and develop enriching relations with others with the hope that more of us will work to change that.

Acknowledgments (for the first edition)

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 in 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 Feiring, 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

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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.

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
IACUC	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MRSA	methicillin-resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>
NhRP	Nonhuman Rights Project
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