

as alternatives, and in English they mean wellness rather than welfare. The distinction is not semantic. Any disorder or slight deviation from ‘normality’ can be considered a clash with wellness or well-being. Whereas, ‘poor welfare’ is aligned with suffering or anhedonia. It is not surprising that some veterinarians consider that poor wellness embraces all disease states and conditions irrespective of their severity or the likelihood of suffering, whereas in other nations when the term welfare is used the focus is on conditions recognised as directly causing or reflecting suffering.

In the concluding chapter, Phillips examines the interactions between nutrition and welfare in a more explicit way in the context of parasitism, and this is exactly what is needed. He also presents a novel argument: “Freedom from malnutrition would more effectively describe the possible welfare challenges associated with nutrition, than would Freedom from hunger and thirst, or a requirement to provide food and water.” The conclusion here is that malnutrition is more relevant than undernutrition and thirst in terms of animal suffering.

This is a large subject but the book has only 247 pages. A comparable book in the same subject area has 786 pages (Worden, Sellers and Tribe 1963). There is a strong case for producing larger books, as a greater selection of chapters would suit the market trend for downloading individual sections and chapters. Some of the topics that could have been added or covered in more depth are: the point at which normal appetite for feed changes into a welfare compromise, such as unrewarded hunger; nutritional wisdom in animals when given feed choice; feed monotony and feed neophobia; the ways in which animals can suffer when experiencing undue competition for feed; the components in palatability that influence feed selection and voluntary feed intake; pica as a sign of welfare compromise; the consequences of overstocking; farming systems that rely on compensatory growth following predictable periods of nutritional deprivation; transhumance and welfare when farming marginal land; weaning methods in cattle; regulating feed intake as a way of controlling disorders (such as leg disorders in broilers and metabolic disorders in ruminants); the influence of lighting patterns on behaviour and feeding frequency in poultry; the role of feed processing and milling in contributing to gastric disorders; emaciation in end-of-lactation, grass-only fed dairy cows; and the welfare of feedlot cattle.

In summary, the book makes a good contribution but there could have been broader coverage of topics and the implications for animal welfare could have been developed further.

References

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Neville Gregory,

Stockwell Gate, Lincolnshire, UK

The End of Animal Life: A Start for Ethical Debate. Ethical and Social Considerations on Killing Animals

Edited by FLB Meijboom and EN Stassen (2016). Published by Wageningen Academic Publishers, PO Box 220, NL-6700, AE Wageningen, The Netherlands. 272 pages Hardback (ISBN 978-90-8686-260-3). Price €70.00.

This collection of essays has its origin in a series of research projects funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, on the ethics of killing animals. It is a more coherent collection than many such endeavours, and one that may be well received by its target audience — that is, by readers of this journal and other supporters of UFAW. On the other hand, its origin in a relatively closed circle means that contentious questions are too often silenced by ‘shared intuitions’ about good practice or the real nature of ‘animals’. The works of Peter Singer and Tom Regan are given more weight, as advocates of ‘animal liberation’, than are alternative, non-analytic and non-Western, models for that revolution. English is not the mother tongue of most of the contributors, and the style of many papers is unidiomatic, or more seriously flawed. All the essays, however, are worth reading, and their collective moral is perhaps the best that can be expected, though it will satisfy neither those committed to the ideals of *ahimsa* (ie the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jainist tradition of respect for all living things and avoidance of violence towards others) nor those with a more triumphalist conception of ‘humanity’.

The editors have divided the papers into four sections: on ethical theory; on ‘societal debates’ concerning the killing of animals; on farm-animals, subjects of experiment, and ‘companion’ animals; and finally on ‘wild’ animals (chiefly fishes). The last three sections address ‘real-life situations’: badger culling, the killing of surplus male chicks or calves, killing experimental subjects once the experiment is over, or the practice of ‘catch and release’ in recreational fishing. What should be done to ‘police’ the interactions of non-domesticated, ‘free’ animals is not addressed. The ‘rights’ that some essayists are happy to grant to animals are rights *against us*: the obverse of our presumed duties toward them — which arguably do not include protecting antelopes from lions, or the like. No-one discusses recreational hunting, bull-fighting or other lethal games — perhaps persuaded that no readers would consider supporting such practices. *Hurting* animals (except for exceptionally good reasons) is a bad thing: whether *killing* them is similarly wrong is moot — and the principal focus of both theoretical and more immediately ‘practical’ essays. These assumptions, and the corresponding lack of historical depth in the essayists’ analyses, will leave some readers unsatisfied, but they may serve a useful purpose.

The section on ethical theory leaves much unexamined. On the one hand, it is not clear what sort of truth or fiction a moral or ethical rule might be. Are ethicists seeking to identify a *truth* about what to do, independent of human

feeling? Or are they merely stumbling towards an agreeable consensus about what in fact we *shall* do? Is a moral law, in brief, a *thesmos* or decree, or only a *nomos*, a convention? On the other hand, no-one grapples with the Darwinian insight — now shared by almost all biologists — that a species is not a ‘natural kind’, but only a temporarily isolated breeding group, with no uniquely shared property. This notion lies at the root of Singer’s rejection of ‘speciesism’ as merely a form of ‘racism’. Whether it should, or whether there is something still to be addressed in the influential, contra-Darwinian, notion of human exceptionalism, are not considered.

Nor is the recognition that we only exist — human and non-human alike — in dependence on the biosphere: above all else we must not harm that latter, and may be rightly worried at the prospect of the Sixth Extinction. Heeger (pp 27-40) rejects the more extreme forms of biocentric policy (such as Paul Taylor’s), for which all living creatures have a value, whether or not they are sentient or self-aware. Such biocentrism, it is supposed, would at best be inconvenient, and — more significantly — divert us from the harms we do to sentients. It might nonetheless be acknowledged, with Aristotle (*Parts of Animals* 1.645a17), that there is something wonderful even in the smallest or basest living things, and that there is correspondingly good reason to doubt the decency of anyone who treats such creatures carelessly. Bernard Rollin’s use of the notion of a natural ‘*telos*’ as the target against which pains, frustrations, deprivations and distortions are assessed (pp 49-60) would apply as easily to plants and prokaryotes as ‘animals’. But, of course, all living creatures depend on the death of others: any large-scale rectification of our ordinary ethical reasoning to take account of long-term ecological concerns, and the real value of every living entity within the whole, must leave mainstream humanism behind — and that may not be a good thing for us here-now. The third century Platonist, Plotinus, could say that we all live as grubs within the great tree of nature (*Ennead* IV.3 [27].4, 26-30), and mean by this that we must care for every living thing, every child of the one Father (II.9 [33].16, 9-10), but it would be far too easy nowadays to elevate ourselves alone (that is, all properly enlightened, prosperous humans) to the rank of universal gardeners (denying a vote to anything outside the magic circle). The commonest attitude nowadays, in the developed West, depends on our *not* treating our fellow human beings ‘like animals’ (let alone grubs), while also agreeing not to *hurt* non-human animals unduly. Even if they have no ‘rights’ (as not being capable of making and keeping bargains of mutual obligation), we ourselves have a duty to our own humanity to treat them decently — or so it is argued in roughly Kantian style by Baranzke (pp 61-78). Do we also owe it to ourselves, to our own humanity, to respect their *lives*, as well as the quality of those lives? Killing even fish, for fun, ‘reflects badly on our character’ (so say Bovenkerk & Braithwaite, pp 235-236).

Once it is agreed that animals — though only vertebrates are considered here — can have good lives, it is difficult not to conclude that they are harmed when those lives are ended

prematurely, whether because they lose the enjoyments they would have had or because their plans for future enjoyment are derailed. The latter loss, but not the former, depends on their having the capacity to look ahead, to be conscious of being the same entity over time — to be, in Tom Regan’s phrase, ‘subjects of a life’, and not simply living. Both Regan and Singer are untroubled by the (painless) deaths of sentient creatures who, supposedly, lack any concept of their own identity through time: the enjoyments one such creature loses may be enjoyed by its replacement, without diminishing overall enjoyment. But many of the animals with whom we deal are self-aware at least to this extent: that they know their own places in a social hierarchy, remember slights and benefits, and have at least short-term intentions. Killing them deprives them of good lives — unless, of course, those lives are already ruined by injury, disease or deep depression. It is suggested, for example by Stafleu (pp 103-114), that we are more merciful to ‘animals’ than to humans in denying the latter an easy death in their terminal illness. Those who wish, in this extremity, that they could be treated more ‘like animals’, perhaps don’t see what they are asking for. Our motives for putting companion animals ‘out of their misery’ are not always ‘merciful’, and the slippery slope is a risk (and not ‘a logical fallacy’, as on p 109). Classing people simply as sentient creatures, even for compassionate reasons, may be to abandon necessary safeguards against racist, eugenicist, and totalitarian ideologies of a familiar kind.

We need not suppose that there is any relevant ‘objective’ reason between human and non-human sentience — any more than there is good ‘objective’ reason to distinguish dogs and pigs, horses and cattle. The editors acknowledge the puzzle: why do ‘we’ mind about some animals and not others, or animals in one role and not another, though there is no ‘objective’ difference — no difference, that is, in the properties of the *objects* of our concern? The differences are *subjective*: that is, are created by the different historical, symbolical, personal associations that ‘we’ (in differing societies and sub-cultures) bring to the affair. The essayists are content to assume a greater unanimity of attitude than exists even in the developed West. How can it be that decent farmers will ignore the scientific evidence that badger culling is an ineffective way of controlling or eliminating bovine TB (see Mepham, pp 117-36)? How can they be distressed by the mass slaughter (in response to Foot-and-Mouth infection) of animals whose lives were already forfeit? Why does the United Kingdom Act (1986) governing the treatment of experimental animals dictate that Old World monkeys (eg baboons or macaques) not be used if New World monkeys (eg marmosets or spider monkeys) are available instead? What matters is the symbolical association, and the enterprises in which we are engaged: we are not thinking of ‘animals’ abstracted from human history and culture and treating them according to their independent natures. The rules we seek to follow even in human affairs, or urge each other to follow, are usually hard to justify simply from first principles, even from a first principle as compelling as that we should treat others as we would wish ourselves to be treated. ‘Thick’ concepts (of decency, loyalty, honour and moral beauty) define the ‘humanity’ to

which we owe a duty. It is these concepts that make it difficult for those outside a particular club to understand how anyone could propose a radical alteration in received behaviour: giving up killing animals (and likewise giving up imprisoning, castrating, and maiming them) will not be a minor alteration in our lives and civilization, as if we were giving up drinking sherry or wearing colourful ties. Individuals would have to find entirely different careers. Businesses would need entirely different goals. Economies would collapse and national boundaries alter (or be forgotten). We would be thinking quite differently of ourselves. So the essayists concentrate on 'norms of ethical behaviour and belief widely accepted in society' (Mepham, p 127) rather than attempt a 'top down' and really radical analysis on utilitarian or deontological principles. Even this often requires a quiet revolution in actual practice: a bias, for example, in favour of rehabilitating and rehousing experimental animals rather than quickly killing them once the experiment is over. The essayists aim to work from common norms, with some gestures towards a 'virtue ethics' founded in Aristotle's insight or insistence that the right thing to do or believe on a particular occasion is what the fully virtuous person would do or believe. The theory is often popular for poor reasons: we all believe that we ourselves are virtuous, and therefore need no further guidance! This was not what Aristotle intended.

The main problem is that the society whose norms they follow is ideologically, historically and geographically isolated. Those British parliamentarians who opposed 'Humanity Dick' Martin's long campaign in the early nineteenth century against bear-baiting, bull-baiting, dog-fighting and so forth did not claim that animals were insentient, nor that they didn't mind being killed. Their claim was rather that such events exemplified and inculcated an admirable and necessary courage in beasts and spectators alike: Utilitarians were despised for conceding importance to pains and pleasures of a kind that 'animals' could share: what should matter to virtuous people was virtue, not enjoyment, because Humanity had a higher destiny. Conversely, Jains and other advocates of 'ahimsa', non-violence, have built their cultures round a recognition of the same soul or 'souliness' in all living creatures: any beast may house the soul of your mother or your friend. The chance of being born human may allow us to step aside from our biologically and culturally mandated impulses of greed, aggression or sloth, and so to acknowledge the animals' complaint against us. If we are different from all other animals in being able to transcend our biological limitations, why not do just that, by actually treating them better?

*Stephen Clark,
Bristol, UK*