

BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEWS

Animal Welfare and The Environment

Edited by Richard D Ryder (1992). Duckworth: London in association with the RSPCA. 216pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 48 Hoxton Square, London N1 6PB, UK (ISBN 0 7156 2403 2) Price £9.99.

This is a very unique assemblage of contradictory philosophies by animal rights advocates and fairly extreme environmentalists presented at an international conference celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). It was held in Oxford (UK) in August 1990. Many of the twenty authors have been quite humble, for usually they are more outspoken in favour of animal rights. As Richard Ryder, the editor, says: 'Not all contributors to the symposium are true believers, and their misgivings and occasional scepticism add, I hope, some spice to the debate.' The book is well worth reading no matter where you stand concerning animal liberation, the green movement, conservation, or animal welfare.

Jonathon Porritt gives a plea for a realistic development of a new set of values of stewardship, and a spiritual understanding of our relationship with the rest of life on Earth. According to Ian Swingland, animal welfare and the environment are today's main issues, and we must improve the plight of our beleaguered natural world. Some interesting background information on how animal protection and environmentalism evolved is provided by James Serpell. The need to work on a global scale is presented by Sidney Holt.

The difference between what is meant by animal welfare, ie the humane treatment of animals, and animal rights, ie the opposition of any exploitation of animals, is well enunciated by Tom Regan. He is not in favour of improving the care of animals, no use of them is the goal. Animal rightists are abolitionists, not reformists, and are quite far from the green movement. Attempts to choose between environmentalism and animal rights are unreal. Mary Midgley stated: 'The two concerns are complementary.' She was very realistic. Do you cull excess deer or just let the environment go to pieces?

Theology aspects are discussed by Andrew Linzey and some interesting perspectives and questions are raised by the veterinarian David Wilkins. According to John Webster: 'Environmental pressures give us no option but to exploit animals'. He defines animal welfare as the quality of the environment as perceived by the animal, and environmental protection as the quality of the environment as perceived by us. Donald Broom, in his analysis of the interrelations between improving animal welfare and providing environmental conservation, uses many excellent examples, which put a new twist on these issues. P D Wall's analysis of pain is the clearest one I have read.

Jane Goodall has an interesting commentary about the treatment of our closest living relatives. Michael Fox discusses how The Humane Society of The United States of America tried to bring about a moratorium on the patenting of genetic engineering of animals. Some in-depth answers to the question as to when we should intervene on behalf of free-living animals are provided by James Kirkwood.

It is difficult for Anthony Suckling to see how we can stop using animals in the near future. By far the strongest green statements are by Edward Goldsmith. Political aspects

of these issues are discussed by UK parliamentarians Bryan Gould and Simon Hughes and Member of the European Parliament Richard Simmonds. In conclusion, according to Richard Ryder, consciousness is anchored within one; it cannot be transferred anywhere else, and sentience is the capacity to feel negative conscious states, or pain.

Since we have highly modified nearly all environments, I see no way that nature can heal the wounds without our help.

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Equal Rights for Animals

Rosalind Kerven (1992). Franklin Watts: London. 32pp. Hardback. Obtainable from the publisher, 96 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4RH, UK (ISBN 0 7496 0825 0) Price £8.50 plus £1.50 postage.

This book is part of a series called New Directions. The series claims to explore 'green' ideas and how they affect people. I don't understand how animal rights can be considered as a 'green' idea, but in the same way that manufacturers of bathroom cleaners have been 'greening' their product, so others have found ways of boosting their market and enhancing consumer appeal.

The book considers a range of topics including the fur trade, dolphin shows and circuses, farming, vegetarianism, zoos, eco-tourism and animal experiments. It has an index, a brief glossary and a list of addresses from which further resources can be obtained. The book is attractively presented with at least one, and up to four, full colour pictures per double page spread. There are typically two or three panels per double page associated with the illustrations. The text does not directly engage the reader with the pictures; this is approached through informative captions. Each page and panel has bold and attention-grabbing headings such as 'Close them down!', 'No more animal clowns' and 'Stop the killing'.

Equal Rights for Animals is well-written in simple language that is appropriate to teenagers upwards. It is informative but opinionated, and this - in my view - is its major failing. If you want animal rights propaganda then this book is for you. What I would prefer, particularly for use in school, public or personal libraries, is a balanced consideration of the issues; sections for and against the topic under consideration followed by a section which engages the reader in *thinking* about the topic and making up their own mind. This book doesn't challenge readers to think, nor does it educate them: it tells them what to think.

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