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# THE PALGRAVE HANDBOOK OF PRACTICAL ANIMAL ETHICS

Edited by  
Andrew Linzey and Clair Linzey



# The Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series

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# The Palgrave Handbook of Practical Animal Ethics

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*For Jake Linzey,  
practical and artistic genius,  
and to Loki the friendly wolf,  
moral exemplars of the human–animal bond*

## Series Editors' Preface

This is a new book series for a new field of inquiry: Animal Ethics.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the ethics of our treatment of animals. Philosophers have led the way, and now a range of other scholars have followed from historians to social scientists. From being a marginal issue, animals have become an emerging issue in ethics and in multidisciplinary inquiry.

In addition, a rethink of the status of animals has been fuelled by a range of scientific investigations which have revealed the complexity of animal sentience, cognition and awareness. The ethical implications of this new knowledge have yet to be properly evaluated, but it is becoming clear that the old view that animals are mere things, tools, machines or commodities cannot be sustained ethically.

But it is not only philosophy and science that are putting animals on the agenda. Increasingly, in Europe and the USA, animals are becoming a political issue as political parties vie for the “green” and “animal” vote. In turn, political scientists are beginning to look again at the history of political thought in relation to animals, and historians are beginning to revisit the political history of animal protection.

As animals grow as an issue of importance, so there have been more collaborative academic ventures leading to conference volumes, special journal issues, indeed new academic animal journals as well. Moreover, we have witnessed the growth of academic courses, as well as university posts, in Animal Ethics, Animal Welfare, Animal Rights, Animal Law, Animals and Philosophy, Human-Animal Studies, Critical Animal Studies, Animals and Society, Animals in Literature, Animals and Religion—tangible signs that a new academic discipline is emerging.

“Animal ethics” is the new term for the academic exploration of the moral status of the nonhuman—exploration that explicitly involves a focus on what we owe animals morally, and which also helps us to understand the influences—social, legal, cultural, religious and political—that legitimate animal abuse. This series explores the challenges that animal ethics pose, both conceptually and practically, to traditional understandings of human–animal relations.

The series is needed for three reasons: (i) to provide the texts that will service the new university courses on animals; (ii) to support the increasing number of students studying and academics researching in animal-related fields; and (iii) because there is currently no book series that is a focus for multidisciplinary research in the field.

Specifically, the series will

- provide a range of key introductory and advanced texts that map out ethical positions on animals;
- publish pioneering work written by new, as well as accomplished, scholars; and
- produce texts from a variety of disciplines that are multidisciplinary in character or have multidisciplinary relevance.

The new Palgrave Macmillan Series on Animal Ethics is the result of a unique partnership between Palgrave Macmillan and the Ferrater Mora Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. The series is an integral part of the mission of the Centre to put animals on the intellectual agenda by facilitating academic research and publication. The series is also a natural complement to one of the Centre’s other major projects, the *Journal of Animal Ethics*. The Centre is an independent “think tank” for the advancement of progressive thought about animals and is the first Centre of its kind in the world. It aims to demonstrate rigorous intellectual enquiry and the highest standards of scholarship. It strives to be a world-class centre of academic excellence in its field.

We invite academics to visit the Centre’s website [www.oxfordanimaethics.com](http://www.oxfordanimaethics.com) and to contact us with new book proposals for the series.

General Editors  
Andrew Linzey  
Priscilla Cohn

## Acknowledgements

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# 1

## Introduction: The Challenge of Animal Ethics

Andrew Linzey and Clair Linzey

I

In Brigid Brophy's novel *Hackenfeller's Ape*, a scientist called Professor Clement Darrelhyde faces a dilemma. He has moral qualms about the treatment of apes in his laboratory, including one ape in particular, called Percy, who is to be used in a rocket experiment. The following dialogue with his colleague—called Post—illustrates Darrelhyde's concern:

“My dear fellow,” Post began. “I had no idea you took it so seriously. But you must adapt yourself to life. You must accept things.”

“Accept what things?”

Post shrugged. “You should know. The oldest adage in natural history—nature red in tooth and claw.”

Darrelhyde did not answer.

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“Correct me if I am wrong,” Post continued, “but isn’t that how Evolution works? The strong exploiting the weak all the way up the line?”

The Professor examined himself. His Evolutionary belief had itself been evolving in these last months. It no longer seemed to him that Evolution proceeded by strengthening the strong: rather it used as its vessel the weak and inadequate, as though they possessed some special felicity that was more fertile than strength.<sup>1</sup>

That developed evolutionary sense, what might be termed “moral evolution,” is the subject of this handbook. It was indeed unusual in 1953 (when Brophy’s book was first published) for experimental scientists to include animals within their moral purview, even more so to risk a distinguished academic reputation as Darrelhyde did. But since the 1950s, a great deal has changed about the world, not least of all our moral attitudes toward animals. Once a neglected topic on the periphery of moral concern, the “animal movement” (for want of a better term) now has taken root in almost every country in the world.

Brophy knew what she was doing, of course. She was a committed anti-vivisectionist or, in more modern terms, was opposed in principle to using animals in harmful research. Darrelhyde’s words represent her own thoughts. She was a convinced atheist (a patron of the British Humanist Association), a fellow believer in evolution, and also a patron of the National Anti-Vivisection Society. And her role in the emergence of the modern animal movement was not insignificant.

Her 1965 *Sunday Times* article titled “The Rights of Animals”<sup>2</sup> brought the issue to public prominence after years of neglect. Although there were certainly other important voices, such as Justus George Lawler,<sup>3</sup> her fame and skill as a writer made people sit up and take notice. But it was the 1971 book *Animals, Men and Morals: An Enquiry into the Maltreatment of Non-Humans*,<sup>4</sup> edited by three Oxford graduate students, to which she contributed, that really put animals on the intellectual agenda. It was later dubbed by Peter Singer as “a manifesto for an Animal Liberation movement.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>B. Brophy, *Hackenfeller’s Ape* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1968), 46–47.

<sup>2</sup>B. Brophy, “The Rights of Animals,” in *Animal Rights: A Historical Anthology*, ed. A. Linzey and P. B. Clarke (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 156–62.

<sup>3</sup>J. G. Lawler, “The Rights of Animals,” *Anglican Theological Review*, April 1965.

<sup>4</sup>S. Godlovitch, R. Godlovitch, and J. Harris, eds., *Animals, Men and Morals: An Enquiry into the Maltreatment of Non-Humans* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971).

<sup>5</sup>P. Singer, “Animal Liberation,” *New York Review of Books*, April 5, 1973.

The book was one result of the so-called Oxford Group, composed largely of students and academics. The term “Oxford Group,”<sup>6</sup> coined by Richard D. Ryder, is something of a misnomer since the various individuals never met all together and had no plan, strategy, or program as such. But it was a time of intellectual ferment, and from that rather unlikely collection of people (philosophers, a sociologist, a psychologist, and a theologian) emerged a cluster of pioneering books, including Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation*,<sup>7</sup> Richard D. Ryder’s *Victims of Science*,<sup>8</sup> Andrew Linzey’s *Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment*,<sup>9</sup> and Stephen R. L. Clark’s *The Moral Status of Animals*.<sup>10</sup>

The title of Brophy’s 1965 article, “The Rights of Animals,” became the title of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (hereafter “RSPCA”) symposium held at Trinity College in Cambridge in 1977, organized by Linzey (then, with Ryder, a council member of the RSPCA). Both Ryder and Linzey were members of the RSPCA Reform Group that sought to change the society’s policies in a progressive direction and, not least of all, to move the society on from its tacit support for foxhunting. The symposium brought together most of the emerging thinkers and intellectuals concerned with animal protection and provided a catalyst for change. The “Declaration against Speciesism” signed by 150 people at the conclusion of the symposium set the intellectual scene for subsequent decades:

Inasmuch as we believe that there is ample evidence that many other species are capable of feeling, we condemn totally the infliction of suffering upon our brother animals, and the curtailment of their enjoyment, unless it be necessary for their own individual benefit.

We do not accept that a difference of species alone (any more than a difference in race) can justify wanton exploitation or oppression in the name of science or sport, or for food, commercial profit or other human gain.

We believe in the evolutionary and moral kinship of all animals and we declare our belief that all sentient creatures have rights to life, liberty and the quest for happiness.

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<sup>6</sup>R. D. Ryder, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Speciesism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 5ff.

<sup>7</sup>P. Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976).

<sup>8</sup>R. D. Ryder, *Victims of Science: The Use of Animals in Research* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975).

<sup>9</sup>A. Linzey, *Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment* (London: SCM Press, 1976).

<sup>10</sup>S. R. L. Clark, *The Moral Status of Animals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

We call for the protection of these rights.<sup>11</sup>

Brophy's contribution to the symposium, interestingly enough, was titled "The Darwinist's Dilemma." She explained the origin of her 1965 article by saying she intended to deliberately associate the case for animals with that "clutch of egalitarian or libertarian ideas which have sporadically ... come to the rescue of other oppressed classes, such as slaves, or homosexuals or women." And she invoked the notion of rights specifically because they are "a matter of respect and justice, which are constant and can be required of you by force of argument; they are not a matter of love, which is capricious and quite involuntary."<sup>12</sup>

Then she turned directly to her dilemma or (as she later called it) "conundrum":

When I feed the pigeons, I shut my cat out of the room. This is a small infringement of his rights, imposed on him by me by main force. I think it justified, in the interest of the pigeons' rights, because if I didn't he would surely have one of my plump, peanut-fed pigeons for his lunch.

If I lunched on the pigeon, I should think myself immoral. If you do so, I must in all honesty say I think you immoral. But I don't think my cat immoral. I think him amoral. The whole dimension of morality doesn't apply to him, or scarcely applies to him.

Here then is the conundrum. Am I setting up my species as morally superior to the cat species? Have I torn down the old class barrier only to rebuild it in moral terms?<sup>13</sup>

Brophy here delineates one important feature of animal ethics: it concerns humans' treatment of animals and not the treatment of animals by other animals. "Do animals really need ethics?" is a usual, if erroneous, comment sometimes made by those who are new to the subject—erroneous because it muddles (as many commentators still do) the realm of nature with the realm of morality. Nature is not a moral textbook either for animals or for

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<sup>11</sup>D. Paterson and R. D. Ryder, eds., *Animals' Rights—A Symposium* (London: Centaur Press, 1979), viii.

<sup>12</sup>B. Brophy, "A Darwinist's Dilemma," in *Animals' Rights—A Symposium*, ed. D. Paterson and R. D. Ryder (London: Centaur Press, 1979), 63–72.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

humans. We shall return to this point later. But for now, the key thing is to grasp that humans are moral agents in a way that animals cannot be. Even if, as some have claimed, animals have moral sense or are capable of some forms of altruism, they are not moral agents responsible for their actions.<sup>14</sup> This means that animal ethics are essentially *human* ethics, and their remit is human actions, individually or collectively, intentionally or half-intentionally, toward animals. That does not mean, of course, that animal ethicists are indifferent to the sum total of suffering and death in the natural world, and if there are ways to alleviate that death and suffering, caused through human or even sometimes natural agency, then animal ethicists should be in the forefront of championing them. But animal ethicists, whether they be Darwinian or religious, cannot change the natural world as we experience it with its complex biological systems of parasitism and predation. Like Brophy, we have to conclude that although we cannot change the (natural) world, we can change ourselves—and that is the moral point.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that sensitivity to animals is a post-1970s phenomenon. There have been ethical voices for animals as far back as the pre-Socratics. However, that sensitivity has been characterized by moments of intellectual advancement and social embodiment. One good example of the latter was the foundation in 1824 of the RSPCA, which pioneered legislation and sought to enforce it through a system of inspectors. And probably the best example of intellectual advancement was the movement from the 1970s.

## II

How then should we characterize animal ethics? We collect here some of the essential elements. For clarity, we need to begin with what animal ethics *rejects*, which can be classified under three headings.<sup>15</sup>

The first is anthropocentrism. By “moral anthropocentrism,” we mean the assumption that human needs, wants, or desires should have absolute or near absolute priority in our moral calculations. As already noted, there have

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<sup>14</sup>See A. Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22–25.

<sup>15</sup>The following sections on anthropocentrism and instrumentalism come from A. Linzey and C. Linzey, eds., *Normalising the Unthinkable: The Ethics of Using Animals in Research* (Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, March 2015), which has subsequently been published in A. Linzey and C. Linzey, eds., *The Ethical Case Against Animal Experiments* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

been thinkers who have challenged moral anthropocentrism in almost every age, but such ideas have often lacked any organizational or institutional backing and have therefore had limited social influence.

Perhaps the most obvious example of moral anthropocentrism stems from the perceived relation between justice and friendship. Aristotle was clear that there could be no friendship between the ruler and the ruled—“for where there is nothing in common to ruler and ruled,” he writes, “there is not friendship either, since there is no justice.”<sup>16</sup> Aristotle provides examples of how there is no justice between humans and inanimate (“lifeless”) objects, since “each case is benefited by that which uses it.” He further explains that “neither is there friendship towards a horse or an ox, nor to a slave *qua slave*.”<sup>17</sup> Aristotle avers that perhaps owners and slaves can be friends insofar as they can “share a system of law or be a party to agreements” and insofar as they are humans, but animals are not obviously included within those stipulations.<sup>18</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas develops this line of thought by proposing that charity (which is defined as a kind of friendship) extends only to God and fellow humans. We cannot have friendship with “irrational animals.” He does stipulate that “we can love irrational creatures out of charity” but only “if we regard them as good things *for others*”—namely, “as we wish for their preservation, to God’s honour *and man’s use*.”<sup>19</sup> Put more simply, animals are considered “irrational,” and because of their lack of reason, humans cannot be friends with them, and neither can animals *in themselves* deserve justice or charity. This Aristotelian-Thomist core, despite various challenges, remains at the heart of much philosophical and theological thought about animals.

The obvious weakness of moral anthropocentrism is that it fails to take account of the interests of animals, or if it accepts that animals have interests, it denies that these interests have any moral weight. Unsurprisingly, Albert Schweitzer likened the history of Western philosophy to that of a person who cleans the kitchen floor, only to find that the dog comes in and muddies it with paw prints.<sup>20</sup> The problem of how to square obligations to humans

<sup>16</sup>Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” in *The Works of Aristotle*, trans. W. D. Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1915), vol. 9, 1161a–b.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., original emphasis.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. the English Dominican Fathers (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1918), part 1, question 65.3, our emphases.

<sup>20</sup>A. Schweitzer, *Civilisation and Ethics*, trans. C. T. Campion (London: Allen and Unwin, 1923), 119.