REVIEWS

Harlan B. Miller and William H. Williams, eds., *Ethics and Animals* (Clifton, New Jersey: The Humana Press, 1983). pp. 400 + xii.

Ethics and Animals collects 27 essays which were originally presented at a 1979 conference held at Virginia Tech. It features important articles by well-known thinkers who set out broadly drawn rationales or critiques of "animal liberation" positions. It also contains some interesting, more finely focused analyses of particular concepts and claims that are involved in animal ethics discussions. A particularly interesting feature of the text is the contribution of nonphilosophers: there are interesting studies of ape language research, stress levels encountered by chickens in intensive rearing, an account of the legal handling of a literal case of animal liberation–the freeing of two captive dolphins from an Hawaiian research institute–and a *vademecum* for animal rights activists.

Annette C. Baier's "Finding Our Place in the Animal World" is a particularly valuable instance of the first class of contributions to the book. It comments usefully on an earlier essay, Jan Narveson's "Animal Rights Revisited" (this sort of cross reference happens often in the text, and is one of its happiest features). Narveson's paper sketches the three moral theories he regards as most interesting–libertarianism, utilitarianism, and contractarianism–and concludes that only utilitarianism provides any support for the kinds of claims animal liberationists typically make, and that even that support is much weaker and more equivocal than many believe. Now, the problem of determining just what implications utilitarianism has for our treatment of animals is much discussed; see, for example, the exchange between Peter Singer and Tom Regan in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* for 1980, and R. G. Frey's recent *Rights, Killing and Suffering*. But Baier's focus is on what must surely be a fairly common response to Narveson's claim that the other theories–libertarianism and contractarianism–leave animals out in the cold. Such a result will seem to many (at least in some moods) to be profoundly counterintuitive. If such theories aren't refuted by their neglect of animals, they must be at least profoundly embarrassed.

Baier notes that, along with what might be called "pro-animal" intuitions, there are certainly "anti-animal" intuitions as well, ones that are not at all disturbed by the massive exploitation of animals. The question is, how should we sort out which set of intuitions are suitable for assessing contending moral theories?

Her article takes the view that "pro-animal" intuitions are less likely to be tainted by special interest and dogmatism than are their anti-animal competitors, and that there is a theory, one unconsidered by Narveson, which nicely accommodates these intuitions. The remainder of the article explores what might be the payoff for animals of such a view, a Humean-style virtue ethics.

Discussions of virtue ethics have been prominent lately–at least since Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*. But the few attempts I have seen to apply such approaches to questions of

animal ethics have been disappointingly obscure. Baier's clear account of the boundaries of such an orientation is thus all the more valuable. I have often found something implausible in attempts to downplay the significance of virtues such as kindness in considering the casuistry of human-animal relations; Tom Regan's oft-made claim (occurring in "Animal Rights, Human Wrongs," his contribution to this volume) that it is not enough to encourage kindness to animals, because such a virtue is a matter of motivation and understanding, not action, has always seemed a bit too quick for me. An animal researcher exploring, say, the nature of pain by harming unanaesthetized animals might be a kind person, but could such a person be at all plausibly described as being *kind to animals*? Perhaps so, but the idea could stand more examination than it's gotten. Given the extent of intuitions proscribing cruelty and prescribing kindness to animals, the practical implications could well be considerable. It is that sort of work that Baier's piece might encourage.

Recent discussions of animal ethics have contribututed to issues of general moral import as well. One of these concerns the criteria necessary for a being to have a right to life. Edward Johnson's "Life, Death and Animals" defends the view that the mere possession of simple consciousness is sufficient to confer a right to life (if anything is), because none of the attempts to isolate a morally nonarbitrary "line of demarcation" between simple consciousness and reflexive consciousness work. Dale Jamieson's "Killing Persons and Other Beings" argues that the possession of simple consciousness gives its subject a prima facie right to life, since consciousness itself is good.

Like Baier, Jamieson comments on the work of his co-symposiasts. He finds Johnson's contribution correct in conclusion but murky in argument. The difficulty seems to be that, while Johnson may have successfully shown that even nonreflexively conscious animals may well have a "derived interest" in life, there is no argument showing that we ought to respect that derived interest. Simply having an interest in something, as Jamieson quite reasonably points out, is not enough to entitle one to that thing. But this critique seems to mistake the direction of Johnson's paper. As I read him, he is not so much showing that animals possessing simple consciousness do have a right to life; rather, he is undermining our confidence in our ability to point to the reason why animals fail to have the kind of right to life that we enjoy. Jamieson's own argument seems to end up having the same sort of problem he accuses Johnson of suffering from–that is, the lack of a satisfactory account of why the harm that death is supposed to be to a creature of simple consciousness is morally significant. Jamieson argues that consciousness is something that we prefer independently of its contents. Accepting this view explains our tendencies to disapprove of euthanasia for the slightly unhappy, and to approve of being awake and somewhat depressed as opposed to being simply unconscious. But, unless Jamieson is willing to countenance unfelt preferences, it is difficult to see the import of this for the simply conscious. For it would seem ex hypothesi that they entertain no preference for consciousness, since consciousness is not something of which they are aware. I suppose one might counter this by saying that consciousness is not good because it is preferred; rather, it is preferred because it is good. If that's so, then the moral theory operating here is not preference utilitarianism, but rather a direct intrinsic good consequentialism. But the article does not show why consciousness is intrinsically good for

one who is unaware of it; rather, it argues that since we complexly conscious beings prefer consciousness to nonconsciousness, it is good for simple beings to be conscious rather than nonconscious. This doesn't seem obviously true, anyway. One might perhaps regard their simple consciousness as a derived good, given its relation to things that animals actually experience as good, but then we are back with Jamieson's criticism of his reading of Johnson: why should we worry about such derived goods?

Ethics and Animals contains several essays by nonphilosophers. My general view of these efforts is that when they address topics that are ethically relevant but do not actually make arguments about ethical issues or ethical methodology, they are extremely useful and interesting. When, on the other hand, they engage in philosophy, they are uneven. Michael W. Fox's "Philosophy, Ecology, Animal Welfare, and the 'Rights' Question" is another of a series of announcements which one hears rather often today, to the effect that the way philosophers tend to go about things is just altogether wrong-headed. Now, this may well be true. But the difficulty is that no one, to my knowledge–certainly not Fox–has shown that it is true, much less gone on to show how things ought to be handled. Part of the problem here, of course, may be that the typical philosopher's standards of what constitutes "showing that something is so" are part of the problem. My own hope is that as the received methodologies continue to be challenged–as, for example, feminist philosophy continues to mature–they may bring us to a better sense of the overall soundness of our typical goals and methods. This is a huge job, but I can't see that anything in Fox's article gets us any forwarder on it.

But these last comments are not intended to deprecate the importance of nonphilosophical contributions to our understanding of our duties to animals. The task of applying ethics is inherently an integrative one; you need to have your facts straight as badly as you need clear concepts and defensible values. *Ethics and Animals* performs an important service by collecting such valuable contributions to all these areas.

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