

## **Peter Sandøe, Stine B. Christiansen: Ethics of Animal Use**

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Peter Sandøe and Stine Christiansen offer a helpful introductory book on ethics and animal use that is geared primarily toward teaching ethics in veterinary and animal science courses. The structure is simple and clear, with a focus on lucidly delineating the complex issues in the field for professionals rather than presenting a sustained philosophical analysis of ethical theory. In this regard, the book will be appropriate and beneficial for those in the former category and less fruitful for those seeking the latter. Nevertheless, anyone in search of a readable and rounded introduction to the ethics of animal use would be well served in reading this book.

The first chapter gives a brief history of animal ethics in Western culture. The traditional view of animals until the nineteenth century was that animals were there for humans to use. The nineteenth century did not bring wholesale changes in views on animals, but it did bring reform on such issues as wanton cruelty. This led to a more general trend in animal protection, giving rise to a focus on animal welfare since World War II. The final contribution to this history was the animal rights movement in the 1970s. This brief summary includes the four main perspectives on animal use: utility or human use, anti-cruelty, animal welfare, and no use standpoints.

The authors outline the ethical theories that serve as the framework for looking at moral dilemmas throughout the book in Chapter 2. Five ethical theories are utilized: (1) Contractarianism holds that morality is a matter of forming contractual relationships between self-interested parties capable of entering a contract and is concerned only with human self-interest. (2) Utilitarianism places an emphasis on the overall good, mainly through minimizing suffering and maximizing pleasure. (3) The rights view holds that subjects have rights to not have certain things done to them, and, when applied to animals, holds that they too have rights and are worthy of respect. (4) The relational view places value and obligations on the specific relationships between the parties involved, such as the human-animal bond. (5) The respect for nature view primarily values collective species and systems in nature over individual animals. Each of these theories is multifaceted and has its own way of operating when values are in conflict.

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Though Sandøe and Christiansen add as much complexity as they feel necessary to these theories, one criticism is that these concepts are somewhat simplified or flattened versions of more complex theories. This may be necessary to keep the text more readable and fluid, but it does an injustice to professionals by limiting the range of possibilities for ethical decision-making. Additionally, the authors attempt a pluralist approach (an approach that does not apply or defend one theoretical approach but highlights or combines several) without drawing out the full implications of this on their models—perhaps the contractarian approach could be enriched by or synthesized with the relational view, as some see an implicit contract in the relationship between humans and certain animals (especially in the case of companion animals).

Three theories of the good life or welfare are sketched and applied to animals in deciding what it means for animals to have good lives in Chapter 3: (1) Hedonism says that the good is pleasure and the good life is one that has as much pleasure in it as possible, or a preponderance of pleasure over pain. (2) Perfectionism is a species-specific theory that values a being's ability to live most fully in accordance with its nature. (3) Preference theory holds that the good is the satisfaction of one's preferences or desires and the good life maximizes this satisfaction. These theories are applied to various measures of animal well-being including health, physiology, and behavior. How one views the standards of a good animal life will determine how well-being is both evaluated and administered.

The role of (primarily) veterinarians and other animal science professionals is examined in Chapter 4. Professionals have wide-ranging obligations spanning from the individual client (and to the patient, though the client is emphasized), to wider social groups, to society as a whole. The role of the professional is mediated by two primary ethical approaches. A consequentialist view seeks to make the best positive outcome, and a positive goal could justify a variety of means. A non-consequentialist view holds that the goal does not always justify the means, and that sometimes the best possible outcome is beyond one's duties. Professionals are also faced with the choice of respecting a client's autonomy, where the client is a partner and the sole decider in the decision-making process, or paternalism, where the professional takes the primary responsibility in deciding what is best for the client (and/or the patient). Additionally, matters are still more complicated by the fact that the animal owner is the client and decision-maker for the patient, which is the animal. Therefore veterinarians must also consider whose interests must be put first, the client or the patient. (It should be noted here that Chapters 4 through 10 are enriched by various co-authors.)

Chapter 5 focuses on the use of animals in food production. There is debate over whether animals were treated better in the past, or if animals have a better situation in the current intensive food production setting. The logistics of the debate do not lead to a clear answer, and, whatever the case, there are still good reasons in four of the primary ethical theories to improve current practices. These improvements are generally encouraged through either animal welfare or vegan strategies. The animal welfare strategy seeks a thorough and gradual reform in animal food production methods, while the vegan strategy seeks to abolish animal food production altogether and to cease consumption of animals.

Chapter 6 summarizes the issues related to infectious diseases in animals that can spread between animals and even to humans. These diseases have far-reaching implications and complications from environmental to economic hazards. Chapter 7 deals with animals in experimentation in the light of three ethical perspectives: contractarianism, utilitarianism, and animal rights. The contractarian view is primarily concerned with the human reaction (i.e., how the public feels about or perceives the justice of animals in research). The utilitarian view seeks the greatest overall good and benefit to result with the least suffering,

and emphasizes replacement, reduction, and refinement of current animal use in experimentation. The animal rights view generally seeks an abolition of animal use in experimentation, though the authors cite some moderate manifestations that have advocated animal usage, but only in cases where the dignity and rights of the animal are not violated. Overall, the authors hold that these views basically agree that animal experimentation is permissible given that the research delivers vital benefits while the animals involved are given the best care possible.

The authors look at companion animals and the special status of this human-animal bond in Chapter 8. There are many considerations involved with animals that are part of a family, and one is the role of veterinarians in the lives of humans and companion animals. Contractarians are concerned with the impact that care would have on the humans, as well as the veterinarian-client relationship. Utilitarians consider the human benefit, but also the animal and the overall resultant benefit/welfare. Animal rights views focus almost entirely on the rights of the animal and respecting its value in life. Lastly, the relational view focuses on the inherent value and obligations that are nurtured in and constitutive of the human-animal bond.

In Chapter 9, the authors draw out the increasingly complex and prescient dynamics of animal breeding and biotechnology. These areas have the ability to dramatically alter the way that animals are used, as well as impact what types of animals even come into existence. The sharp increase in human-centered mass breeding and gene-alteration has regularly neglected the welfare of animals in these systems. Additionally, there is a concern that we cannot predict the results of genetic engineering and that we should not alter nature if not necessary.

The final chapter highlights the respect for nature view in the area of wild animal management. The respect for nature view emphasizes the value of entities beyond the individual, such as species and ecosystems—this perspective addresses holism over individualism. For this reason, the respect for nature view is more adept at granting moral status to the complex and contested concept of nature as a whole. The authors argue that other ethical theories presented in the text can also contribute ways of approaching nature that may benefit nature as a whole. For example, contractarians may advocate a wise use policy to sustain the human usage of animals, utilitarians may advocate the management of certain animals for the better overall welfare of the entire wild population, and animal rights advocates may trumpet the intrinsic value and rights of the individual animals that comprise the whole.

Sandøe and Christiansen seek to present a dispassionate outline of the competing perspectives on animal ethics, though they recognize this is an unlikely goal. One could go a step further and say that this is not only unlikely, but simply impossible. In this particular case, the authors effectively navigate a variety of difficult topics and theories with competence, though their position is apparent at times. The authors lean toward a reformist over abolitionist position on animal welfare, and they seem to justify compromises where some may see too much of a sacrifice of animal well-being. However, their position is not heavy-handed, and the book certainly stands as a helpful introductory study for veterinarians and animal science professionals.

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