

**ANIMALS AS MORAL OTHERS:  
OBLIGATION IN THE CONTEXT OF ANIMAL  
EMANCIPATION**

GARY McCARRON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Social and Political Thought  
York University  
North York, Ontario

May, 1998



**National Library  
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services**

**395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada**

**Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et  
services bibliographiques**

**395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada**

*Your file Votre référence*

*Our file Notre référence*

**The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.**

**The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.**

**L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.**

**L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.**

0-612-33541-0

Animals as Moral Others: Obligation  
in the Context of Animal Emancipation

by Gary McCarron

a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
York University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

©

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF YORK  
UNIVERSITY to lend or sell copies of this dissertation, to the  
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this dissertation  
and to lend or sell copies of the film, and to **UNIVERSITY  
MICROFILMS** to publish an abstract of this dissertation.  
The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the  
dissertation nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or  
otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

## ABSTRACT

This project explores the idea that animals are moral others. The project looks critically at the work of contemporary animal rights philosophers Peter Singer and Thomas Regan in addition to several historical figures whose writings have played important roles in the development of the modern animal rights movement. Specifically, the thesis examines the influence of René Descartes and Charles Darwin on the present structure of animal rights theorizing. Its main intention in this respect is to give evidence of the way in which the modern movement for animal emancipation remains chiefly indebted to what has been called "moral extensionism", that is, granting animals moral warrant only to the extent that they are regarded as extensions of human beings.

In contradistinction to this conventional view, this paper advances a more radical claim, namely, that animals are moral agents not simply because of the ways in which they are similar to people, but equally because of the ways in which humans and animals differ. In other words, without abnegating entirely the significance of similarity in moral thinking, the paper claims a place for difference in how we should conceptualize moral relations.

This position is argued on the strength of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, whose ideas about moral theory represent a significant challenge to conventional views in philosophy. The project incorporates Levinas's ideas and combines them with concepts derived from philosophical biology in order to show several points of convergence. In so doing, the essay attempts to demonstrate that Levinas's ideas about morality may lend themselves to an interpretation which shows that animals occupy a place in the moral realm.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project involved many friends and colleagues in discussions and debates about animals, human society, and the differences between ethical agendas and moral relations. In the first instance, my advisors Paul Antze, Mildred Bakan, and Stephen Levine provided me with the kind of supervision and support students usually only can imagine. Their kindness as much as their intellectual probing of my ideas has been greatly appreciated, especially since I have been an "absent" candidate during the final period of writing. I hope that the result of their labors adequately reflects the respect I have for their wisdom.

Many friends have, in various ways, provided me with both guidance and assistance. In no particular order I want to thank Bob Adolph for his anecdotes and good humor; Robert Haynes for his generosity and infectious energy; Ted Winslow for his capacity for sustained critical interrogation; and Gerald Vise for his friendship and quiet inspiration. I also want to extend my gratitude to Paul Heyer for his creative suggestions and bike rides; Michael Hayes for his timely advice; and Robert McCarron for saying that this sounded like a good idea. I think he was right. I also want to express my gratitude to Bob Anderson for the numerous ways he offered me assistance. Conversations with

Barbara Noske were especially welcome in light of the subtle but elegant suggestions she offered.

Jude Kornelsen, Silva Tenenbein, and Devorah Greenberg helped me to see more clearly the connections that bind together historical consciousness, cultural critique, and philosophy. They furnished me with opportunities to discuss and reflect on my ideas, and gave me opportunities to laugh at what I was doing. No antidote for frustration is better than humor. I also want to acknowledge Blair Rosser's interest, support, and friendship. He has helped me to appreciate the value of striving to see beyond the perimeters of academic convention. Also, Glen St. Godard and Ann Gabsity have given me important insights into the value of pursuing a goal. Glen's confidence in my abilities, though possibly misguided, has been appreciated tremendously nonetheless.

Time and again Cathy Hill managed to see through my confusions and redirect my wandering interests. Her insights and suggestions have been of measureless value, and her love and patience made it possible for me to push ahead into what was often a tangled forest of ideas. When I was unable to see this forest for its confusion of trees, she helped me to find the places where light had penetrated, opening up the paths before me. She has made it all worthwhile.

The struggle that is writing leaves casualties. Many people have been responsible for much of my good fortune, but I alone am responsible for the errors and confusions the reader may stumble upon.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	vi
<b>PRFEACE</b> .....	1
<b>INTRODUCTION: OBLIGING THE READER</b>	
Against Humanitarianism.....	6
Being Obligated.....	14
Outlining the Argument.....	26
Overview.....	31
<b>CHAPTER ONE:</b>	
<b>PROMOTING AN AGENDA FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS</b>	
Moral Horizons.....	43
Singer: Utility and Ethical Cartography.....	51
The Principle of Equality.....	54
Regan: The Inherent Worth of Animals.....	59
Animals and the Categorical Imperative.....	60
Rationally Defective Ethics.....	66
Not Naming the Animals.....	72
A Question of Sympathy.....	81
Competing Paradigms of Emancipation.....	89
<b>CHAPTER TWO:</b>	
<b>FACING THE MORALITY OF THE ANIMAL-OTHER</b>	
Legislating Animal Rights.....	100
The Moral and the Ethical.....	108
Thinking Difference.....	116
Absolute Obsession.....	128
Being-for the Other.....	132
The Morally Relevant Animal Other.....	142
Sentiment and Reason.....	153

**CHAPTER THREE:**

**MORAL OBLIGATION AND THE ANIMAL MACHINE**

Descartes's Garden.....175  
Descartes's Tree.....176  
Descartes's Doubt.....188  
Descartes's Clock.....198  
Descartes's Ethics.....205  
Descartes's Zoo.....215

**CHAPTER FOUR:**

**EVOLUTIONARY CONTINUITY AND THE IMMANENCE OF MORAL BEING**

Evolutionary Continuity.....225  
Time and the Chain of Being.....231  
The Creed of Kinship.....247  
Evolution and Moral Sympathy.....262  
Time and the Darwinian Conscience.....276

**CHAPTER FIVE:**

**CENTRICITY AND DISPLAY: ADOLF PORTMANN  
AND ANIMAL SUBJECTIVITY**

The Mystery of Hidden Being.....292  
A Semiotics of Animal Being.....300  
The Subject of the Animal World.....307  
Meaning and Counterpoint.....316  
The Mystery of Appearance.....321  
The Map is Not the Territory.....337  
Animal Rights and the Color of Morality.....347

**CONCLUSION: READING THE OBLIGER**

The Primacy of the Moral Relation.....367  
The Morality of Flesh.....381  
The Moral Animal.....389  
Obligation and Belonging.....395

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.....403**

## The Animals in That Country

In that country the animals  
have the faces of people:

the ceremonial  
cats possessing the streets

the fox run  
politely to earth, the huntsmen  
standing around him, fixed  
in their tapestry of manners

the bull, embroidered  
with blood and given  
an elegant death, trumpets, his name  
stamped on him, heraldic brand  
because

(when he rolled  
on the sand, sword in his heart, the teeth  
in his blue mouth were human)

he is really a man

even the wolves, holding resonant  
conversations in their  
forests thickened with legend.

In this country the animals  
have the faces of  
animals.

Their eyes  
flash once in car headlights  
and are gone.

Their deaths are not elegant.

They have the faces of  
no-one.

Margaret Atwood

## PREFACE

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd, I stand and look at them long and long...

- Walt Whitman

In truth, as beings whose being is projected into temporality, we humans can claim no status more special than the raccoons, the porcupines, and the woodchucks we slaughter with our motorcars.

- Erazim Kohák

The foolproof--universal and unshakably founded--ethical code will never be found; having singed our fingers once too often, we know now what we did not know then, when we embarked on the journey of exploration: that a non-aporetic, non-ambivalent morality, an ethics that is universal and 'objectively founded', is a practical impossibility: perhaps also an *oxymoron*, a contradiction in terms.

- Zygmunt Bauman

GLOBE AND MAIL--Brutalis, a rare white rhinoceros that was diagnosed as psychotic after smashing two Danish zoos, is being successfully rehabilitated in Africa, reports Reuters. Doctors say the 15-year-old's aggressions, which caused more than \$27,000 in damages, date back to the trauma of rejection by its mother at birth, after which its only playmate was a basset hound. Zoologist Richard Oesterballe said the African experiment was going surprisingly well and the rhino was looking trimmer and happier. Brutalis was peacefully co-existing with other rhinos, three males and three females, but had not established any social ties. March 16, 1994.

In this essay I examine the question of the moral status of animals. Although this subject has its roots in antiquity, only in recent years have books, articles, and conferences brought the matter before academic audiences. Similarly, it has only been recently that the popular press has shown interest in the analysis of animal rights. The mass media, however, usually portray the movement as a radical offshoot of environmentalism, and commonly ridicule its members as well-intentioned, though morally misguided

souls. Indeed, the popular image of the animal activist offered by the mass media is generally an uncharitable caricature in which the activist's supposed indifference to human misery is often highlighted. The reservoir of human compassion is limited, popular forces would have us believe, and those whose sympathies are channeled to animals will not have sufficient reserves for the plight of their fellow humans. Thus the animal activist is generally represented as a callous and anti-human figure, ill-informed as to the necessity of animal experimentation, and willing to sacrifice people in order that unfeeling beasts might be spared.

Of course, no study supports this portrayal (Jamison and Lunch, 1992). Indeed, research shows that those who join animal advocacy organizations are more likely, for instance, to be members of Amnesty International than those who shun animal activism. Susan Sperling's studies also show animal activists to be better educated on questions of science and medicine than the general public (1988). The popular misrepresentation of the animal activist is an indication of the difficulty Western society experiences in attempting to articulate ideas that are critical of the established modes of thinking that direct everyday behaviors

and assumptions. This difficulty then translates into repudiation.

But the attraction of the mass media's image of the animal activist, and its widespread appeal in the mainstream outlets of popular culture, also indicates the importance society attaches to the task of domesticating and co-opting the animal rights agenda. I believe it further suggests the pressure we feel to bend our sense of obligation to fit the conventions of our society's ethics. Although its admission to the halls of the academy and the editorial pages of the dailies might be recent, the West's collective interest in animal rights advocacy is itself an important cultural event. Regardless of the merits of the different parties to the discussion, this fact alone makes an examination of the animal rights movement a timely and important task. And at a time when the borders between the moral and the practical have grown especially porous, an investigation into the idea that animals are owed moral consideration would seem called for even more strongly.

My personal views regarding animals' moral status are not without some importance in explaining the underlying motivations that brought me to this topic. Indeed, given the way that moral issues of any sort will evince a curious and often difficult intersection of intellectual and

emotional appeals, it is hardly surprising that the tension between logic and sentiment, which plays a significant role in the following analysis, also served as one of the forces directing my own sense of what makes this issue worth discussing. I approached the subject as someone who was drawn by the arguments detailed in the animal rights literature, but who subsequently became concerned that these arguments overlooked significant dimensions of the moral relation. Consequently, what follows is a paper that reflects my efforts at sorting out some of these difficulties. It also chronicles my attempts to find answers to a number of questions concerning abstract notions like ethical duties, moral responsibilities, and the experience of feeling obligated. Although I have emerged from this exercise believing that animals deserve moral consideration, I do not believe that the arguments provided by the animal rights movement establish an adequate foundation for steadying this belief.

And yet I have not replaced this foundation with another substructure. Rather, I have come to realize how precarious are all foundations for moral action. This conclusion, as I hope to indicate in the following pages, can be liberating, although I can hardly pretend that at times it is not also rather distressing. If nothing else,

my study of animal liberation has emancipated my own thinking from some of the conventional restraints of moral philosophy. As Furrow has said, "the most important thing to know is how fragile our moral judgments can be; what small comfort they provide; yet how essential to our humanity they are" (1995: ix). The truth, I suppose, is not always encouraging.

## INTRODUCTION: OBLIGING THE READER

According to anthropologist and African specialist Colin Turnbull, countless American tourists are disappointed by their actual African safaris, and speak of being more successful at finding the participation in nature they seek by visiting a Disney theme park.  
- Elizabeth Laurence

The fascinating thing about the human being is the animal-like features; the most fascinating thing about the animal, the human-like features.  
- Gunter Gebauer

We polish an animal mirror to look for ourselves.  
- Donna Haraway

### ASSOCIATED PRESS

BROOKFIELD, ILL.--A toddler fell into a gorilla exhibit at the Brookfield Zoo on Friday afternoon and was rescued by a female gorilla who cradled the child and took him to zookeepers.

The three-year-old boy injured his head falling six metres on to concrete in an area with seven gorillas. He was still alert when taken to hospital but was listed in critical condition later.

Binti, a seven-year-old female gorilla with a baby gorilla on her back, picked up the child, cradled him in her arms and placed him near a door where zookeepers could retrieve the boy, said a zoo official. August 17, 1996

### Against Humanitarianism

Are animals deserving of moral concern? Some readers will wonder as to the value of the question. After all, the establishment of animal welfare agencies in the last century, and the proliferation of such organizations in the ensuing decades, appears to testify convincingly to the claim that we already show moral regard for animals. Given that humanitarian organizations advocating the elimination of cruelty to animals have existed in various forms since the early eighteen-hundreds, how could one doubt that we

already take animals into account in our talk of moral issues (Ryder, 1989)? Hence even to inquire as to the moral status of animals will strike some readers as superfluous, if not willfully misguided.

The success of the humanitarian movement in connection with animal welfare indeed has been remarkable. The founding in Britain of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in 1824 sparked the establishment of similar organizations throughout Europe within decades, and by 1866 the Society had its first chapter operating in North America. By the turn of the century, virtually every industrialized nation could claim at least one formal body dedicated to the promotion of animal welfare (Ritvo, 1987; Ryder, 1989). Paradoxically, perhaps, industrialization would appear to have been of considerable benefit to other creatures.

It would be a mistake to assume, however, that by the start of this century cruelty to animals had been abolished; in fact the first Animal Welfare Act in the United States was not passed until 1966. But with the development of the industrial economy, and the displacement of animals from the domains of industry and commerce, interest in the plight of the non-human (urban) population assumed less utilitarian motives than had been the case in the pre-industrial world.

Shifted from the center of commercial activity to the periphery of society, many animals, in a sense, became homeless (Berger, 1980). For the first time, public attention was given to the question of how animals were to be treated. The formalization of our duties to animals as these were reflected in the mandates of an increasing number of humanitarian organizations was an important indication of the way that popular attitudes towards animals changed from the pre-industrial to the industrial era (Berger, 1980; Thomas, 1983). Hence our regard for animal suffering, it has been pointed out, seems to have increased in direct proportion to their marginalization in the industrial and commercial arenas (Thomas, 1983).

The appearance of animal welfare agencies has also gone hand-in-hand with an increase in the cultural space by which we separate ourselves from animals, for the march of civilization--especially when measured in the form of technological development--has correlated directly with a broadening interest in anti-cruelty legislation.<sup>1</sup> In

---

<sup>1</sup> "What the elite emancipated itself from was the 'animal' or not-sufficiently-human, ignorant, dependent, 'other side' of their selves--which became immediately projected upon *le menu people*, the coarse and uncouth 'masses' that in the eyes of the self-liberating elite epitomized all these hideous and repugnant marks of the animality in man" (Bauman, 1993: 23). It is interesting to note that whereas animal activism had long been associated with the upper and educated classes, it was originally the elite, as the

particular, the spread of animal welfare organizations has proceeded in tandem with increasing industrialization and urbanization (Russow, 1989; Tester, 1991; Thomas, 1983), a development that has led some commentators to note that the promotion of animal welfare has followed our literal and symbolic movement away from animals (Berger, 1980; Bauman, 1987; Benton, 1988). In other words, as our distance from animals has increased, so apparently has the desire for legislation to protect animals from mistreatment, a relation that has led some investigators to suggest that anti-cruelty legislation is merely a product of an affluent society.<sup>2</sup> Thus while we might point to humane legislation as evidence of our willingness to grant animals some form of ethical standing, legislation may also signal the appearance of a culture in which animals have become marginal beings (Berger, 1981; Thomas, 1983; Budiansky, 1992).

---

passage cited here from Bauman indicates, who sought to establish their privileged station by a process of active disengagement from the animal world. Admittedly, the connection between the upper classes and animal activism has loosened considerably in recent years (Fox, 1980; Leahy, 1991; Nash, 1989; Sperling, 1988). Nonetheless, the historical connection is important to bear in mind as it provides additional context for understanding the forces that have given the animal rights movement its politically charged character.

<sup>2</sup> This interpretation is a subject of considerable debate, especially on the theme of pet-keeping. For an interesting exchange of ideas on this aspect of the animal rights question, see Phineas, 1974; Ritvo, 1988; Serpell, 1986, 1989; Shell, 1986.

Although one might infer that legislative efforts to protect animals from harm are evidence of their moral status, contemporary animal rights advocates have regarded such legalistic initiatives quite differently. While legislation might promote kinder treatment on the basis of humanitarian appeals, humanitarianism itself is often the target of modern animal activists. The present-day movement for animal rights is a radical movement, and its major proponents are inclined to view humanitarian objectives as neo-liberal capitulations rather than as a means for achieving genuine ethical reform. Thus while the animal rights movement claims humanitarianism as one of its philosophical starting points, it has virtually severed its dependence on humanitarian ideals as a means of promoting authentic animal welfare. Hence

the more extreme critics [of humanitarianism] contended that a well-treated captive animal was still a captive, just as a healthy slave was still enslaved. If animals had rights not just to life but to liberty and fulfillment, as some philosophers were contending by the 1970s, then it was wrong for humans to hold them against their wills for other than absolutely essential purposes. (Nash, 1989: 185)

This distrust of self-professed humanitarian motives in the matter of our treatment of animals has been a divisive issue for animal advocates for some decades. The radicalization of the RSPCA, for instance, was discernible in the minority views that surfaced at several international meetings earlier in the century, culminating in the 1950 international gathering at The Hague when Arthur Moss, Chief Secretary of the Society, proposed the establishment of an international welfare body that would champion, among other causes, the elimination of animal experimentation. This plan was too extreme for the Society, however, which in addition to other programs, continued to instruct developing nations on humane means of animal slaughter.

Unsurprisingly, radical members of the Society regarded efforts to establish guidelines for humane slaughter as hypocritical, and by the nineteen-sixties a series of splinter groups antagonistic to the Society's conservative politics took up various animal welfare causes, including direct action in the form of hunt sabotage and the release of caged animals (Nelkin and Jasper, 1992; Ryder, 1989; Tester, 1991). The Society's original reform mandate was challenged by a new agenda, one that was driven by a desire to see the total rejection of what Derrida has called our culture of *carno-phallogocentrism* (Derrida, 1990).

Humanitarianism, in other words, was eyed skeptically by those radical members who rejected the apolitical implications of kindness. In its place, a decisively politicized agenda espousing equal treatment of animals was advanced as a necessary corrective to the paternalistic blindness of traditional animal welfare advocates.

By 1975, when philosopher Peter Singer published Animal Liberation, the animal rights movement had already established itself as doubly-articulated in its oppositional stance. On the one side, animal rights activists opposed the traditions of using animals for food, or as human surrogates in medical, scientific and commercial experimentation; in that sense, they opposed institutionalized cruelty to animals. On the other side, animal rightists were positioned at odds with the accommodative strategy of mainstream humanitarian groups like the RSPCA; in this respect they also opposed what might be considered institutionalized (or legislated) forms of kindness. Given the extent to which animals figure in all sectors of the capitalist economy from production to consumption, the animal rights movement ultimately demanded a total transformation of the social order (Wiley, 1991). The revolutionary undertow along which the animal rights

movement began to course, carried its followers further than ever from mainstream values.

The animal rights movement's radical position in regard to humanitarian attitudes is not without precedent, nor should it be cast aside as merely ill-conceived. The movement's repudiation of humanitarian motives, I believe, can be seen as a rejection of a narrowly circumscribed understanding of the nature of moral obligation. Anti-cruelty legislation, that is, underscores the difficulty of thinking about animals in a moral context that is independent of self-serving, human-centered concerns. Although animal advocates allege to speak for animals in voices emptied of human intonation, the reasons for their rejection of humanitarian values must be looked at closely.

In the end, the question concerning the moral status of animals can not be answered adequately by simply referring to anti-cruelty legislation. While legal reforms in the area of factory farming were evidence to some of what Elias (1978, 1982) called "the civilizing process," to others these changes had the opposite effect of institutionalizing animal mistreatment. The radicalization of the RSPCA, and the recent proliferation of animal rights organizations around the world, have made clear that the more extreme animal rights activists regard legislative initiatives in

the area of animal welfare inadequate and even dangerous. The protections afforded by legislation are generally connected with corporate and industrial interests; that is, animal welfare, at the legislative level, is largely tied up with human considerations, a connection between humanism and humanitarianism thereby being revealed (Benton, 1988; Ehrenfeld, 1981). The challenge of animal rights philosophy, therefore, would seem to be about finding ways of conceptualizing moral relations to animals independently of anthropocentric motives.

### **Being Obligated**

A second difficulty with the question of animals' moral status--and one more difficult to articulate than the issue of humanitarian ideals--is that we generally remain unclear concerning the nature of obligation. I do not mean only that we are uncertain about what might constitute our obligations to other creatures, but that obligation itself is a difficult philosophical, political, and perhaps experiential notion. Having a conscience certainly implies that relations with others play a decisive role in our understanding of what it means to be obliged. It is less certain what sorts of others might inspire us to these feelings of obligation.

As Montaigne suggested, there is a "mystical foundation" to law and authority which is occluded from view by social convention (Montaigne, 1987). Are we obedient because the law is just, Montaigne asked, or is the law just because we are obedient? So too we might ask: are we obligated because the demand is just, or is the demand just because we are obligated (see Løgstrup, 1971)? Is it possible to find the source from whence derives the experience (or feeling) of being obligated?

To be obligated, John Caputo points out, is to be tied to some thing, one, or other (1993). Obligation means a binding together (*Oblige*: to constrain; *obligare*, to bind together, *ob*, near; *ligare*, to bind), a linking of individuals in relationships framed by need and expectation. Yet we are bound to others in many ways, and moral obligation is but one kind of connection. In addition, there is a tendency to see ourselves as limited by the weight of obligation, dragged down, as it were, by the demands under which obligations place us. Being tied to the other in the context of obligation, in other words, seems to suggest a kind of imprisonment. Freedom and obligation, common experience suggests, are antithetically opposed.

However, being-obliged, as I will suggest later, may have a different structure from that which is sketched

above. Emmanuel Levinas, whose ideas figure prominently in the following pages, has suggested that the foundational issues in moral thought we must face are not questions of why or how we are obligated; rather, must be open to the fact that *in being we are already obliged*. "Responsibility for the other precedes every decision, it is before the origin. An-archy" (Levinas, 1972: 103). Responsibility, he says, enters the scene long before we can formulate questions with which to interrogate it:

The I is not simply conscious of this necessity to respond, as if it were a matter of an obligation or a duty about which a decision could be made; rather the I is, by its very position, responsibility through and through. (Levinas, 1962: 17).

Similar views are reflected by other writers. For instance, in being obliged, Knud Løgstrup proposes, we take on the responsibility for the Other's well-being in such a way that our own freedom is secured (1971). Being obliged to the Other is really a matter of communication and trust, Løgstrup says, and has little to do with the imposition of limitations on our freedom. Indeed, this follows, as Bauman insists, from the fact that obligations establish the conditions that make freedom possible: "freedom without community means madness," he writes, "while community

without freedom means serfdom" (1995: 127). To be a member of a community, to be awash in the social ocean of obligations, is to be capable of self-expression, action, and freedom. As the Other approaches and appeals to my sense of justice, I awaken to the opportunity for self-fulfillment. As John Llewelyn writes:

In appealing to me both as height and in the humility of his unclothedness and hunger, the Other does not limit my freedom. On the contrary, he sets my freedom free. By imposing on me the burden of responsibility, the Other releases me from the anonymous fatality of the burden of being from which enjoyment and work could bring only temporary relief. (1995: 102)

In being tied to the Other, then, freedom and self-fulfillment are made possible, not annihilated. The paradox of such freedom, as Bauman says, is that it is because we are able to make moral choices that ethical codes regulating moral conduct become a necessity (1993: 28). In the end, obligation emerges as a paradoxical feature of the moral relation.

And yet, what of our potential obligations to animals? How do we define the meaning of moral obligation in the context of a relation with an Other whose very alterity establishes an abyss over which mutual understanding is

unable to reach? Must I speak the animal's language in order to legitimate the feelings of obligation that might rupture my complacency? How can I be responsible to a being so utterly different from me?

Or is the animal's alterity overstated? Visually impaired owners of guide dogs have for years reported anecdotes that confirm the view that their dogs "understand" their owners to be blind (Noske, 1997: 154). A fable perhaps, but one that assumes significance in part because it challenges the rationality characteristic of our approach to other creatures. Animals and humans, in many circumstances, can form exquisitely profound bonds we generally describe in anthropomorphic terms such as loyalty, affection, and even sadness. Such bonds as these stories suggest can be put down to a kind of sympathetic attachment, or an emotional engagement between beings about which reason can tell us little. Perhaps obligations to the animal Other are felt in this way?

Lyotard suggests that "a phrase is obligatory if its addressee is obligated" (1988: 108). Yet this seems to slip obligation too completely into the realm of language, suggesting that obligations arise only in the context of prescriptive discourse, the sense of obligation itself being contained in the enunciation of a particular speech act.

Despite Lyotard's efforts to extend Levinas's ideas into the practical arena of language and daily life, this is not a terribly helpful way of thinking about obligations in the case of animal Others for whom linguistic relations are impossible. How would we ever be obliged to animals (presuming we might feel this way) if we were forced to await on an utterance? Is obligation a quality that is inherent in the Other, or is it a description of a relation between self and Other? If it is a particular kind of relation, in what sense is one obliged?

I will not say much about the nature of obligation here, for it is a complex issue, and one to which I return frequently in the following pages. In these introductory remarks, however, I will suggest that obligation is a relation, not a thing, that it is more a matter of commitment than convention, and that it is an irreducible feature of communicative life. In obligation, as Levinas says, I no longer belong to myself, but have become hostage to the Other (Levinas, 1981). Obligation, as Levinas explains it, appears in the face of the Other, whose vulnerability strikes me as a force (or an imperative) which makes me responsible for the Other's welfare. Obligation, in this regard, is the power of powerlessness. To be obliged is to be made a captive of the weak and suffering.

This is, as Derrida has put it, the "absolute dissymmetry" of Levinasian equity (1990: 959). Or, as John Caputo has suggested--and echoes Derrida in so saying--obligation is an irreducible fact of social life wherein I am captured by the Other's weakness. This asymmetry which characterizes Levinas's view of the moral relation will be shown to stand in radical contrast to the demands for equality (or symmetry) characteristic of the contemporary animal rights movement. I want to suggest in this essay that the powerless and vulnerable condition of the animal Other constitutes those aspects of the primal moral relation about which Levinas writes.

I realize that these expressions are more hyperbolic than they are precise, but it is difficult to strike for precision so early. It is especially difficult because obligations concern specific, concrete situations, and to speak of these situations in general, abstract terms is to assume a theoretical standpoint from which the faces of those we survey grow indistinct.<sup>3</sup> And whether we can say

---

<sup>3</sup> As one of Levinas's interpreters (and critics) John Caputo has put it, "Obligations are communications between proper names and proper names provide the element in which obligations are communicated" (1993: 70). This point is reinforced by Derrida, who says that "justice always addresses itself to singularity, to the singularity of the other, despite or even because it pretends to universality" (1990: 955). Similar arguments can be found throughout the

that animals have faces in the sense intended by Levinas is indeed a matter of some debate. To think about the possibility that we can feel obligations for animals, then, means thinking about the kinds of relations with animals into which we can enter.

But what is an animal? More directly, how are we to deal with the obvious preference people have for mammals over reptiles, or birds over fish? These are difficult questions upon which I will only touch in this Introduction. Clearly, it would be duplicitous to suggest that all animals are discussed equally in animal rights literature; indeed, the preference for mammals in this literature is overwhelming. But it might be equally deceptive to suggest that this apparent species preference is a failing of animal rights advocates. Preferences are what they are--

---

personalistic account of the nature philosophy given in Erazim Kohák's The Embers and the Stars (1984).

I should also point out that an ongoing debate in zoology concerns the question of how individual animals are accorded membership in groups like species. The French naturalist Buffon, for instance, argued that "there are really only individuals in nature, and genera, orders and classes exist only in our imagination" (in Jacob, 1973: 47). Similarly, in more recent years, anthropologists have begun to question the legitimacy of assigning humans to races, suggesting that to continue this practice is to capitulate to political interests (especially in service to colonialism) rather than to advance any meaningful scientific understanding. The basic idea here is that from a moral perspective, the individual must be the elementary unit of concern; from a scientific vantage point, the abstractly identified group is the essential unit.

preferences. A more valuable consideration would be to inquire how such preferences are constructed, and to what extent our sympathies for some kinds of animals over others are best explained by appealing to our embodied experiences and natural inclinations, rather than by looking to the abstract logic expounded in a philosophical text. Levinas's work seems to suggest that so-called biological arguments--by which he refers to a range of concepts including zoology and evolutionary theory--are fundamentally opposed to ethical concerns. The division between biology and ethics, however, may be problematic, as I will attempt to demonstrate later. Levinas retreats into the relatively standard practice of assigning animals to "higher" and "lower" places in the scale of animality in order to deal with the issue of animals as moral others. However, it may be possible, I will suggest, to find within his philosophical perspective ways for overcoming the rather traditional (and even teleological) arguments he advances. It is Levinas's own hesitancy concerning the applicability of his views to the question of animal moral status that I will attempt to exploit.

The face of the other must touch me in some respect for any sense of moral concern to be aroused. In the context of the animal's alterity, then, some bridge must span this

chasm of difference. Without some form of attunement, some structure of orientation, the other's appeal would pass unheard. In the midst of the other's alterity, there must be a common linkage that makes the other's appeal audible. The other must, in some sense, be my neighbor.

Indeed, the chords of sympathy are plucked more readily by the call of affinity than they are by the hands of difference, and it is obvious that our concern for species whose behavior mirrors our own will normally outweigh our concern for more evolutionarily distant creatures. "There does indeed seem to be a deep emotional tendency, in us as in other creatures," writes Mary Midgley, "to attend first to those around us who are like those who brought us up, and to take much less notice of others" (1983: 106). And this emotional tendency, Midgley goes on to acknowledge, is mainly a biological impulse, one that may have been ingrained in the human biogram in consequence of its evolutionary value. Neighbors, however we might understand the concept, must resonate with something within us. As I will suggest later, it may be that the co-evolutionary relationship between humans and certain kinds of animals has played a crucial role in defining the sorts of moral affiliations we commonly take as natural. That the face of the animal Other is chiefly a mammalian countenance is

perhaps explained by the way in which our identity as human beings has been defined against the identity of animal beings of mammalian origins. That Levinas, who is uncertain to what extent a dog has a face can state more emphatically the absence of a face in the case of snakes, suggests that some theory of biology is implicit in his philosophical ruminations despite his putative opposition to biological thinking (Wright, 1988; Clark, 1997).

This is a complicated affair that I will tackle later in the paper. For now it is important that I indicate that throughout the essay I have used the word *animal*, and the phrase *animal being*, not with an eye to indiscriminate ambiguity, but because the vast differences between animal species are difficult to encapsulate in any simple fashion. And, as I have mentioned, entire books devoted to the subject of animal rights rarely make distinctions between species--or, at least, tend to regard the relevance of such distinctions to the question of moral obligation as being settled by presumably objective criteria. I will try to sort out some of these difficulties in later chapters. It may be, however, that the radical alterity of the non-mammalian creature is such as to defy a Levinasian approach to the moral demand of the Other.

The moral relation, as Levinas construes it, stands beyond ontology, is otherwise than being, or is non-representable. The moral relation is thus diminished in being translated into ontology, into the realm of language and order. But such translations are the very heart of contemporary animal rights theorizing. Indeed, I believe that most contemporary efforts to articulate an animal ethics are deficient in that they endorse the view that moral obligation can be separated from feeling.<sup>4</sup> The main tenets of contemporary animal rights activism are based on a disavowal of any kind of sympathetic or emotional regard for animals. Animal rights activists claim that only when we

---

<sup>4</sup> Mary Midgley writes:

Quite often we are moved by a strong Darwinian or Franciscan sense of kinship with other living things, which can be as influential as the distancing and revulsion which at other times replaces it. However, what is really worrying at present is the impression many people have that the revulsion accords better with science. These people seem to believe, first, that science ought not to be guided by emotion and, secondly, that whereas love and admiration are emotions, disgust and contempt are not. Accordingly, all enquirers who have loved their subject-matter, from the Greek astronomers...to field naturalists...would be anti-scientific, and should be replaced by others who are indifferent to them. However, since indifference would drive people away from the study altogether, it may seem that the best a scientist can hope for is actively to dislike his subject-matter, and help to remove the good opinion which others have ignorantly formed of it. (1988: 44-45)

have been convinced of the validity of an ethical agenda achieved through logical deduction can we hope to have found compelling reasons for improving the conditions under which animals share the planet with us. But this disregard for affective connection between people and animals, I will suggest, prohibits the development of an authentic moral relation between self and animal Other. It also imposes a kind of conceptual distance between humans and the natural world that, as Erazim Kohák suggests, makes it hard for us to think about the moral sense of nature (Kohák, 1984). For these reasons I believe we must rethink the notion of obligation if we are to even begin answering the question about the moral status of other beings. In the end, I suggest that we must accept the feeling of being obliged as a condition that may tell us more about the moral relation than does the knowledge of having duties.

### **Outlining the Argument**

In this essay I develop two main lines of argument. The first is a critique of the contemporary animal rights movement, and the way that the movement has arisen in relation to developments in evolutionary biology. It is my suspicion that the animal rights movement, in its efforts to construct what philosopher and animal activist Peter Singer

(1975, 1993) has described as a "new ethics" for our treatment of animals, has failed to acknowledge--and in many instances openly repudiated--the necessity of evaluating our relations to animals in the moral context of our own animal nature. To put this another way, the animal rights movement's narrow focus on the production of a logically rigorous argument for the ethical treatment of animals, has disavowed the significance of sympathetic (and empathic) modes of concern for other beings. This devaluation of people's emotional concern for animals is not an incidental consideration in the animal rights movement, but a major aspect of the movement's deliberate construction of an ethical program. For instance, animal rights philosopher Tom Regan writes that

since all who work on behalf of the interests of animals are more than a little familiar with the tired charges of being 'irrational,' 'sentimental', 'emotional', or worse, we can give the lie to these accusations only by making a concerted effort not to indulge our emotions or parade our sentiments. And that requires making a sustained commitment to rational inquiry. (Regan, 1983: xii)

Regan's fear of sentimentality, though partly pragmatic, is also born of his adherence to Cartesian objectivism and the

structuring of the human-animal relation in terms of the subject/object dichotomy. Hence my first line of argument in this paper is a critique of this mode of conceptualizing our moral relations with animals, especially as this "new ethics" promotes a kind of intellectual distancing which, I will suggest, militates against the development of a truly moral regard for other species.

The second line of argument developed in this paper follows from the critique of animal rights activism sketched above. I suggest that the program of constructing an animal ethics modeled after traditional forms of reason-discursive ethics does not achieve the required radical transformation of moral philosophy to which its adherents aspire.<sup>5</sup> That

---

<sup>5</sup> I use the expression *reason-discursive ethics* throughout this work in reference to ethical codes that privilege rational deliberation over sentiment and feeling. A similar phrase, "discursive ethics", is used by Bauman (1995), who says that the realm of discursive ethics is the realm of convention. By contrast, he observes, the world of morality is the world of commitment. Discursive ethics is produced from the rational deliberations that yield conventions; morality is constitutive of a relation for the Other based on feelings of commitment. Thus Bauman proposes, in contrast to discursive ethics (or reason-discursive ethics), a condition of moral commitment he calls the *participatory-empathic stance*. He writes:

The participatory-empathic stance is always, irreparably a personal stance personally taken--it is endemically erratic, shuns codification, cannot be taught or obtained by rote learning, and for this very reason the world of ethics, the world of regularity, codes, teaching and learning has no room for empathy and emotional participation in the sufferings of the Other. (1995: 57)

is, I am suggesting that human moral sensibility is itself a non-discursive, non-rational facet of our nature, and that our moral sense is primarily connected to our animal being. Although we have moral responsibilities for animals, these responsibilities are given to us individually and are not (and cannot be) made contingent upon the demands of the social order. That is, I want to suggest that morality emerges from the recognition of an inherent empathy for living being, not from a rationally determined understanding of the meaning of specific laws and regulations. What makes us moral is our animal being; it is by our human being that ethical conventions are created. As sociologist Zygmunt Bauman explains, ethics "substitutes the learnable knowledge

---

In her feminist critique of the animal rights movement, Josephine Donovan (1990) advances a similar argument. She suggests that rationally ordered codes of ethics tend to embrace conventional qualities associated with patriarchal culture, while situational or empathic modes of ethical analysis tend to a feminist orientation. This view is also forwarded by philosopher Valerie Plumwood (1993) who argues strongly against the application of conventional ethics to questions of environmental ethics and animal rights, advocating instead what she calls an "ethics of care" (loosely adapted from Heidegger). Plumwood suggests removing rights and reason from their dominant place in contemporary moral thinking, in order to "pay more attention to some other less universalistic moral concepts such as respect, sympathy, care, concern, compassion, gratitude, friendship and responsibility" (1993: 173). A similar line of argument is advanced by Kenneth Gergen (1991).

I would suggest that in terms of those modern views of ethics that dominate the animal rights debate--namely utilitarianism and neo-Kantianism--a reason discursive

of rules for the moral self constituted by responsibility." Hence I am suggesting that in attempting to provide rules in the form of utilitarian and neo-Kantian theories, animal rightists advocate answerability to the "guardians of the code" in place of "answerability to the Other and to moral self-conscience" (Bauman, 1993: 11).

These two lines of argument help to illuminate the primary moral condition of human being. I suggest that our moral nature can be traced to the fact that we are animals, and that the animal rights movement, in its efforts to articulate a comprehensive and universal animal ethics, devalues the animal being which they simultaneously claim to be rehabilitating.

The animal Other is both metaphorically and literally the Other of the moral relation: metaphorically, because it is our own animal being which first breathes life into the moral condition, and literally, because animals are themselves capable of being responded to as morally relevant Others.<sup>6</sup> Animals make claims upon our moral sensibilities

---

method for calculating obligations is nearly always an unexpressed presumption of the system.

<sup>6</sup> I have capitalized the *other* in *animal Other* to underscore the point this sentence is making (see Caputo, 1993: 197ff). To put it simply, the animal Other is a center of subjective experience toward which human moral impulses can be drawn. As I will suggest in Chapter Four, this impulse, this being-for-the-Other, is the originary condition out of which our moral sensibilities are developed.

not merely because we can show through deductive reasoning the logical necessity of according them rights, but because at the level of our individuality we respond to the need and the vulnerability of the animal Other as the articulation of a moral imperative.

### **Overview**

In Chapter One I examine the contemporary project for animal liberation. Here I establish the main lines of argument offered by the two foremost contemporary advocates of animal rights: Peter Singer and Tom Regan. Singer and Regan are generally regarded by members of the animal rights movement as the principal architects of the modern animal rights agenda, and although they pursue different philosophical trajectories (Singer is a *preference utilitarian* while Regan is a neo-Kantian advocate of the *rights view*), their work both separately and in editorial collaboration forms the essential texts of animal activism. In explaining how both Singer and Regan argue for the moral consideration of animals, I also try to indicate in what respects their views are so firmly entrenched in the promotion of reason discursive ethics that neither is

concerned with thinking through the obvious difficulties of attempting to rid our moral relations with animals of all traces of sentiment.

In Chapter Two I take up the task of framing an approach to moral thinking that addresses the central deficiencies found in Singer's and Regan's work. This perspective is derived from the writings of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, and is supported by the interpretations of his work that have been appearing with increasing frequency in the English-speaking world. My main debt to Levinas is his argument that the moral relation is one that exceeds or is "beyond" ontology insofar as our experiences of being obligated for the Other are experiences that stand outside of--or are beyond--linguistic and even conceptual articulation. My objective in bringing Levinas's work to bear on the subject of animal rights is to demonstrate that animals, as Levinas might say, are our neighbors.

Although Levinas has never addressed directly the applicability of his views to the question of animals' moral status, I believe that his philosophy can be interpreted to show that animals warrant certain fundamental forms of moral compassion. Indeed, it is part of my argument that the idea that animals are morally relevant beings is actually

prefigured in Levinas's writings, and that the application of his arguments to the present topic is in no way a distortion of the central tenets of his perspective.

Levinas's work is difficult, and I have relied extensively on the interpretations of his philosophy as these are found in works by Zygmunt Bauman (1993, 1995), John Caputo (1993), Adriaan Peperzak (1993, 1997), Paul Ricoeur (1992), John Llewelyn (1991, 1995) and in the many essays by other interpreters which I cite. In each instance, I have returned time and again to Levinas's writings (the English translations available) to clarify my own thinking and to determine the adequacy of his many interpreters' evaluations.

I want to emphasize that the result is not an essay in Levinasian philosophy, but an argument informed by his thinking. I make this disclaimer mainly to alert readers to the fact that I do not pretend to have offered a new interpretation of Levinas's views. Rather, I have borrowed his ideas on responsibility and the alterity of the Other, and applied these in a way that helps to illuminate what I take to be a central problem in animal rights thinking. In addition, I should point out that no interpretation of Levinas can, in any sense of the word, be pure. Whether it is Bauman's sociologically oriented version of Levinas, or

Caputo's Kierkegaardian reading, each of his interpreters' texts is inflected with philosophical accents betraying the writer's academic homeland. My situation is no different. I have not sought to read Levinas against Levinas, but have tried to show how his views on the primary moral relation might be productively applied to the question of our regard for animals.

Chapter Three picks up the thread of the historical narrative touched upon in the opening chapters, and begins to detail the way in which Western attitudes to animals--including attitudes of a moral character--were shaped chiefly by the successes of the scientific revolution. To this end I consider the role that Rene Descartes has played in the history of animal rights philosophy. No writer has figured more prominently in advocating the position that animals be removed from the sphere of moral consideration. My main objective in this chapter, though, is not to criticize Descartes for developing what is known as the thesis of animal automatism, but to explain how he came to embrace that doctrine, and to show how, in the course of establishing the indubitability of the *cogito*, Descartes also fashioned an ethical theory that showed--albeit inadvertently--the irreducibility of moral obligation. I also indicate how Descartes's work helped initiate a form of

reason discursive ethics which, in denying to animals the status of moral beings, acknowledged nonetheless that our common mistreatment of other creatures led to feelings of guilt. Thus while Descartes viewed the doctrine of animal automatism as having as one of its most cherished attributes the potential to give comprehensive, scientific explanations for somatic activity, the ethical dimensions of the doctrine--in the context of its capacity for alleviating guilt--were of equal value in his overall philosophy.

In Chapter Four the story of the West's moral attitudes to animals unfolds further with the appearance of the second major figure for animal activists: Charles Darwin. If Descartes is the avowed villain of animal rights philosophers, Darwin occupies the narrative's role as unassuming hero. As I point out in this chapter, Darwin's work in establishing our mutual evolutionary origins with other creatures has been decisive in the development of the animal rights position. The continuity thesis of evolutionary biology establishes that humans and animals share a common lineage, and that many of the forms of behavior observed in animals are distantly related to analogous behaviors we observe in ourselves. Hence the continuity thesis is interpreted by many animal advocates as a clear statement of our moral obligations to animals since

it shows the apparent immediacy of our natural, biological connection.

But the continuity thesis, although widely endorsed by advocates of animal rights, raises difficulties for a theory of animal moral obligation that are largely overlooked. It is unclear, for instance, precisely what is accomplished in volumes that marshal extensive evidence for animal consciousness, animal emotion, animal knowledge, and so on. The intention of bringing this evidence forward, of course, is to prove by sheer weight of research that animals are more like us than we are generally disposed to recognize. Our ignorance of these many points of similarity can easily be put down to unfamiliarity, but once the blinders have been lifted, in what respect is such evidence likely to influence us? How compelling is somatic similarity? Do not such arguments tell against species that give few indications of anthropomorphic talents?

In the end I suggest that similarity is a valuable issue in the animal rights debate, but its value has largely been overstated. If we subscribe to the view that animals that are similar to us are worthy of moral consideration, then we have ruled out of the moral kingdom those creatures whose mode of being is foreign to our understanding. This is another difficult question to deal with, but in the

following pages I take up the matter of similarity with the view that we must extend our notions of obligation independently of the narrow confines of biological continuity.

In Chapter Four I also propose that Darwin's conception of morality can be compared to Levinas's notion of the primal moral relation. Moreover, I suggest that Darwin's account of the evolution of the moral sense with its emphasis on the embodied nature of moral sensibility connects readily with Levinas's concept of the pre-discursive structure of moral being. Levinas's view of the moral relation is often described as an "unmediated" relation to the Other, transcending both linguistic and conceptual structure (Wyschogrod, 1995: 137). In my analysis of Darwin's work I attempt to provide a way of expressing this unmediated relation as a form of *affective connaturality* in which moral-being appears as the essential grounding of our impulse for the Other.

In promoting the Darwinian continuity thesis, animal rights activists carry to an extreme the tendency to repudiate difference, falling into a kind of "moral extensionism" in which only creatures similar to humans are regarded as morally relevant (Warren, 1990). The logic of moral extensionism leads directly into the promotion of

reason discursive ethics, thus establishing the legalistic framework within which contemporary animal rights issues are debated. To break away from this convention-ridden model of responsibility requires finding new approaches to the study of moral thought. This is the role that Levinas's works play in this project. But in order to think about animals in an equally novel way--one that escapes the discursive reason embedded in Cartesian mechanism and some aspects of neo-Darwinism--it is also necessary to take a different perspective on the scientific study of animals. This is the aim of Chapter Five in which I examine the work of Swiss zoologist Adolf Portmann. Portmann's work has focused on the social aspect of animal being and, in that connection, suggests an important point of commonality with Levinas's views on moral individuation in the context of the relation to the Other. In addition, Portmann's studies bring forward a sustained critique of certain aspects of Darwinian theory; in particular, Portmann is critical of the emphasis that classical evolutionary theory places on explicitly functional explanations for animal appearance. Here again his work resonates with Levinas's views insofar as both writers are concerned with explaining the way in which being breaks with the dictates of mere survival in its self-expressive relation to the world of Others. In concert with

Levinas, then, I accept that the break with pure being signals the arrival of the Other as face; but with Portmann, I further suggest that the Other who first so confronts us is the animal Other, the other whose familiarity bespeaks not a common, abstract historical bond, but an immediate sympathetic touch rooted in the common experience of what Hans Jonas has called simply "life *per se*" (Jonas, 1966).

Based on Portmann's work, therefore, I suggest that it is possible to support the view that animals have a face in the Levinasian sense; that animals are, in other words, morally relevant Others. But I also propose that the attempt by animal rights philosophers to advance an animal ethics ultimately fails in direct consequence of their insistence that the moral relation must give evidence of no signs of sympathetic attachment. Whereas animal activists contend that an emotional bond with animals constitutes an impediment to the development of a rigorous ethical project in which animals are brought into the moral community, I maintain that it is precisely in this structure of affective intentionality that our moral relations to animals can be conceptualized and experienced.

It is customary in works that touch as directly as this one does on questions of ethical conduct and moral obligation that the writer is expected (or obliged?) to

catalogue the do's and don'ts that those seeking a roadmap for an ethically worthy life should consult. Of course, it has become equally fashionable today--especially among postmodernists--to decry all efforts at trying to provide rational form for what is clearly an ambivalent state of affairs. For instance, Bauman (1993, 1995) summarizes both of his books on Levinas with neither prescriptions nor recommendations, explaining instead that to conclude that our moral predicament is a deeply ambivalent one is the best conclusion to which we can come. Similarly, Caputo (1993) argues that undecidability in moral affairs should be viewed not as an impediment to understanding, but as an accurate account of the state to which modernism and reason have led us. The one-dimensionality of the ethical roadmap, it would seem, depicts little of the uneven terrain of the moral landscape.

It would be simple to follow this model, and to throw up one's hands in a kind of intellectual exasperation declaring the futility of seeking beyond the ambivalent. Nevertheless, I want to do something more than this, though the seductions of ambiguity are hard to resist. In the conclusion, therefore, I suggest ways in which one might find a practical dimension in some of the insights we can glean from Levinas's work, especially as these insights

articulate with the effort to think critically about the ways in which our responsibilities for animals--rather than our duties to animals--might best be understood. This is a particularly difficult task given the reticence that Levinas and his interpreters have shown in attempting the development of a metaethical program. Nonetheless, I believe it is necessary for a project that looks critically at a contemporary instance of an increasingly cacophonous moral debate to explain, however provisionally, the manner in which theory might profitably inform praxis.

Finally, no feature of modern life has been more decisive in its influence on the scope and structure of moral obligation than the "diffusion" of responsibility across the spectrum of social relations, and the replacing of the individual conscience by reason discursive ethics. In trying to find ways of suggesting what kinds of pragmatic consequences follow from this examination and critique of the animal rights movement, it is necessary to be critical of this tendency to shift responsibility from self to system. Hence it is not so much a matter of claiming our responsibilities and obligations that matters, as it is acknowledging the claim that obligations have upon us as moral agents. "Whatever hope there is for morality," writes Bauman, "it must be related to the preservation of the

instinctive repulsion to gratuitous cruelty" (Bauman, 1995: 148). To strengthen this connection is the practical ambition I have set myself in this project.

## CHAPTER ONE : PROMOTING AN AGENDA FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

A road map that helps us easily find our way from one side of the continent to the other owes its great utility to its exceptional existential poverty. It tells us absurdly little about the trip to be experienced in a welter of detail. Indeed, its value for us is in the fact that it is so essentially inane.

- Kenneth Burke

It is seldom that I laugh at an animal, and when I do, I usually find out afterwards that it was at myself, at the human being whom the animal has portrayed in a more or less pitiless caricature, that I have laughed.

- Konrad Lorenz

The justification of the neighbor's pain is certainly the source of all immorality.

- Emmanuel Levinas

THE GLOBE AND MAIL--When conservationists at South Africa's Pilanesberg game reserve discovered a series of systematically killed rhinos, they had two clues to the culprits: tusk-shaped wounds on the corpses and elephant footprints in the vicinity. Although an elephant does not normally attack a rhinoceros, the game reserve has a number of unsupervised, adolescent males who would normally be kept in line by bulls. Without adult role models to test themselves against, the animals have become juvenile delinquents. October 13, 1994

### Moral Horizons

Australian philosopher Peter Singer inaugurated the modern animal rights movement with a 1973 review essay in the New York Review of Books. Linking his thesis for animal liberation to emancipation movements benefitting women, people of color, and gays and lesbians, Singer argued that all liberation movements entail "an expansion of our moral horizons" (1973: 17). Such expansions, Singer acknowledged, are finite, a somewhat paradoxical conclusion suggesting that every moral horizon has its terminus. Citing his intellectual debt to English philosopher and economist

Jeremy Bentham, Singer claimed that only creatures capable of suffering pain can be admitted into the moral community. Sentience, in other words, marks the border of compassion, and explains at the same time our tendency to privilege animals whose cognitive structures most closely resemble our own. Singer did not deny that other philosophers might carry his views to a more extreme interpretation (as Christopher Stone would the following year by asking if trees might not have moral standing [Stone, 1974]). But on the subject of limiting moral concern to animals Singer himself was adamant. Hence animal rights activism emerged as an ethical programme cut off from the more mainstream aspects of moral philosophy even as it separated itself from its radical cousins in deep ecology and environmental ethics.<sup>1</sup>

That so radical a position would appear in a prestigious mainstream publication was a signal that a significant upheaval in moral philosophy was looming. In the West, ethical theory traditionally has elected only human beings as essential subjects. As philosopher Paul Taylor has argued, only humans are both moral agents and moral subjects, the former describing a class of beings

---

<sup>1</sup> See Tobias, 1988, and Wolfe, 1993 for the split between animal activism and deep ecology.

capable of acting rightly or wrongly, the latter that class of beings towards whom moral agents have duties (Taylor, 1986). Only people, that is, can act morally while simultaneously expecting ethical consideration from others: only humans have both rights and duties. Animals might fall into the matrix of ethical calculations, but only in the circumstance of being related collaterally to people; hence "wild" or "untamed" animals--those with no claim to a privileged status through human association--have been regarded generally as beyond the reach of most ethical systems (Levi-Strauss, 1967; Thomas, 1983). In this respect, animals historically have been a subject of ethical inquiry but never themselves genuine subjects of ethical concern. Singer's argument, which moved well beyond the boundaries that ethical agendas had previously set in terms of our relations to animals, was contentious, revolutionary, and even a bit disquieting.

The distinction between wild and tame introduced a binary logic to the West's system of classifying nature that centered on the politics of utility (Willis, 1974). The instrumental value of the tamed, and the valueless or *not-yet-valued* nature of the wild, provided a foundational structure for the way in which we relate to animals. But the dichotomy between the valued animal and not-yet-valued

beast was more than a project of economic reasoning, for it also represented the application to nature of a way of conceptualizing important human relations. As Morris Berman notes, the Tame/Wild distinction, the dichotomy of Self and Other, the dualism of body and mind,--and possibly Taylor's distinction between moral agents and moral subjects--all speak of the origins of culture as an act of separation that ruptured our connection to the natural world (Berman, 1989: 71ff.). That which is valued must have value *for us*. Treating tame creatures ethically was thus contingent upon the self-interest of some human master.

Such binary logic as constructed the tame/wild distinction formed the modern political landscape as a series of dualisms in which difference was construed in terms of the logic of hierarchy (Derrida, 1981). The alterity of the animal-Other thus assumed the character of that which was to be feared, domesticated, and often destroyed. The otherness of animals, both as signifier and product of their exclusion from culture and ethics, testifies to the imperative of assimilation (enculturation, civilization, taming) as a precondition for entitlement in the sphere of ethical value. The realm of the tame, the cultural, the civilized, and the ethical could be juxtaposed

against their dualist alters only so long as the domination of the cultural/ethical ego was kept firmly in view.

Dualisms which cast the animal as the alter, the untamed Other, and the yet-to-be-valued creature, helped to stabilize root metaphors that made ethical conduct a passport into the human community. "The law of the jungle" expressed a sense of the untamed animal Other as amoral in its necessary subservience to nature, but immoral in its representational task as a mirror of human society.

Socialization, as writers as varied as Freud, Durkheim, and Elias have argued, has largely been a task of restraining and controlling our animal impulses. The "civilizing process" described by Elias (1978, 1982) involved the elaboration of ethical structures that could assist in the containment of our animal passions, while establishing determinative forms of public behavior which were naturalized through codification, tradition, and social sanction. Such regimentation served important social and political purposes, but it had the additional effect of helping to make ethical thinking immune to the possibility that animal welfare was in any way a legitimate concern for moral debate.

Although it was not until this century that a concerted and well-organized mobilization of political activists

dedicated to the promotion of animal liberation first appeared, this process had its roots in the nineteenth century, when industrialization made animals increasingly marginal to the processes of production (Thomas, 1983; Berger, 1981; Tapper, 1988; Budiansky, 1992). When animals that had formerly served active roles in the industrial economy were replaced by machines, society was confronted with the problem of beings toward whom some measure of responsibility might be owed, but for whom the exact measure--and the actual constitution--of that responsibility remained something of a mystery. Nonetheless, as anthropologist Richard Tapper has argued, awareness of our potential moral duties to animals arose when animals were effectively displaced from their roles in the processes of production, such that "anthropomorphism began to replace anthropocentrism" (1992: 48). As *marginal Others* animals emerged as candidates for *moral Others*.

The political activism of the animal rights movement was thus related directly to the history of the industrial economy; but it was also fueled by a growing disenchantment with many traditional theistic structures of legitimation that defined our relations to animals (see especially Noske, 1997; Singer, 1975; Regan and Singer, 1989; Rollin, 1981, 1989). In its contemporary formulation, the animal rights

movement renounces the ethical primacy of stewardship outlined in the Christian interpretation of Genesis, viewing the mandate for stewardship as a veiled justification for establishing relations of domination. The untamed animal, then, in order to become a deserving subject of moral concern, needed to be brought into the reach of everyday compassion without the sacrifice of logic to faith.

Singer's 1973 article raised difficult questions about the nature of the relations between people and the environment as well as our relations with the untamed animal. More significantly, perhaps, it raised troubling questions about our notions of domestic animals, including those confined in zoos and those we keep as pets. Following a closely reasoned utilitarian scheme, Singer demonstrated the inadequacy of the arguments generally used to justify our treatment of animals. Employing an effective rhetorical strategy, Singer did not so much attack Western societies for inherent cruelty--although this charge was implied between the lines--as he challenged his readers to produce logical reasons--justifications--for continuing in our customary ways of dominating other creatures.<sup>2</sup> Accepting

---

<sup>2</sup> A professor of moral philosophy once explained to me that he found Singer's arguments distressingly convincing, and that despite a concerted effort, he had been unable to discover a logical rebuttal to the animal rights position. He further explained that until he found a logical rejoinder

that animals warrant some kind of ethical standing, Singer asked his readers to prove otherwise.

In what follows, then, I want to look more closely at the central arguments of the contemporary movement for the emancipation of animals. My chief objective is to offer a critique of the two major positions in animal rights philosophy: Peter Singer's *preference utilitarianism*, which I have touched on above, and Thomas Regan's *neo-Kantian rights view*. Though there are important differences in their respective approaches to animal liberation, Singer and Regan are regarded generally as the principal architects of the philosophy of animal rights in the West. In order to grasp the essential points of the modern animal rights movement it is necessary to look in some detail at the work of these two philosophers.

---

he would continue to eat meat, wear leather, and live his life just as he always had lived it, confident that someday he would discover his answer to Singer's arguments. When I suggested that this seemed rather self-serving for someone who prized reason above sentiment, he countered with the explanation that in the real world, the logical and the *psychological* were two remarkably different phenomena.

I mention this not only because I suspect it is a common attitude, but because it reveals a general tendency to value the abstract principle over personal responsibility. In addition, confidence in ethics is perhaps one of the more decisive features distinguishing ethics from morality. This is an issue I discuss in detail in the following chapter.

## **Singer: Utility and Ethical Cartography**

Probably the most widely known of the contemporary animal rights advocates, Australian philosopher Peter Singer does not subscribe to a view that is commonly associated with his name, the view that animals possess rights. Singer rejects this idea, arguing instead that the moral status of animals should be secured according to the rational calculations of *preference utilitarianism*.<sup>3</sup> Following his 1973 article, Singer elaborated his position in his book Animal Liberation (1975), further developing his arguments in Practical Ethics (1993). He has written also on the ethics of medical science, reproductive technologies, and

---

<sup>3</sup> Singer defines *preference utilitarianism* as the process of judging actions "not by their tendency to maximize pleasure or minimize pain, but by the extent to which they accord with the preferences of any beings affected by the action or its consequences" (1993: 94). Singer regards this view, which he announced in the second edition of Practical Ethics, as a better and a more comprehensive utilitarian project than the classic form of utilitarianism first devised by Mill and Bentham. The chief advantage, he advises, is that preferences are broader than pleasures.

However, one could plausibly interpret the works of classical utilitarian philosophers as implying in their use of the terms 'pain' and 'pleasure' meanings that were adequately broad (and sufficiently equivocal) to embrace the 'preferences' and 'interests' to which Singer refers. Singer has acknowledged this possibility and concedes that "if this interpretation is correct, the difference between classical utilitarianism and utilitarianism based on interests disappears" (1993: 14).

environmentalism. In his treatment of each of these issues, Singer has followed closely the utilitarian approach.

Following utilitarian philosophy, Singer claims that it is the consequences that our actions have on other beings' interests (or preferences) that determine whether that action is morally good. It follows, then, that only beings who have interests are to be included in the moral circle. But what sorts of animals are capable of interests?

According to Singer:

The only legitimate boundary to our concern for the interests of other beings is the point at which it is no longer accurate to say that the other being has interests. To have interests, in a strict nonmetaphorical sense, a being must be capable of suffering or experiencing pleasure. If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for disregarding that suffering, or for refusing to count it equally with the like suffering of any other being. But the converse of this is also true. If a being is not capable of suffering, or of enjoyment, there is nothing to take into account. (1975: 176)

Singer's utilitarian approach unites the capacity to have interests with the capacity to experience suffering (and, by corollary, the capacity to experience pleasure).

As with any consequentialist theory of ethics, Singer maintains that it is the results of our actions that determine their rightness or wrongness, rather than the intentions that might initially have accompanied them. More precisely, in consequentialist, utilitarian ethics, an act is judged as morally good when it tips the scales of balance more toward pleasure than toward pain. It is important to note that in subscribing to a utilitarian theory, Singer's position on animal liberation promotes a social rather than an individualistic ethics. That is, individual cases in utilitarian programs are generally resolved by an application of the law (or principle) to the case.

Just how closely does Singer follow the features of classical utilitarianism? In his work on utilitarianism published in 1861, John Stuart Mill wrote that

actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure. (in Velasquez and Rostankowski, 1985: 111).

Aside from his emphasis on the notion of preferences, Singer follows this classical approach rather faithfully with one other significant addition: to discover whether an

act is morally good or wrong in Singer's ethics, the act must be judged on the basis of how much happiness over pain it promotes in regards to *all sentient beings*, not merely human beings. Animals that are capable of experiencing pain must be conceptualized as a part of the moral community and their interests included in the utility values and calculations. In this way Singer expands the circumference of the moral circle to include those creatures whose interests--apparently--should have been accounted for in the first place.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Principle of Equality**

Given the fundamental nature of pain and pleasure, and given further the zoological evidence that many animals are capable of experiencing pain (and, by pain's absence, pleasure--see Walker, 1983; Griffith, 1984), Singer's utilitarianism holds that we are morally enjoined to take into our calculations the prospect that our actions might

---

<sup>4</sup> Some readers might suspect that this argument lands Singer in a tautology. If certain animals' interests are to be considered in the process of moral reasoning (those that are sentient), then those animals would appear to be already included in the moral community; that is, their happiness or their pleasure is already being included in the overall ethical calculation. Yet the essential aim of Singer's argument is to provide a logical platform for proving that animals *should* be included in the moral community. It is not entirely clear why animals have been given "the vote" in

cause animals to suffer. Singer refers to this basic expression of his ideas as the *principle of equality*. According to Singer, the principle of equality is the foundation of all ethics.

Equality is a moral ideal, not a simple assertion of fact. There is no logically compelling reason for assuming that a factual difference in ability between two people justifies any difference in the amount of consideration we give to satisfying their needs and interests. The principle of the equality of human beings is not a description of an alleged actual equality among humans: it is a prescription of how we should treat animals. (Singer, 1989: 77).

There are a number of important points in this short passage which fairly sums up Singer's philosophical program, but there are two that I want to highlight. First, Singer subscribes to the position that ethics is universal, that "an ethical principle cannot be justified in relation to any partial or sectional group" (Singer, 1993: 11). The principle of equality promotes a view of ethics and moral behavior that must be separated from any "factual difference in ability." Ethical judgments, in other words, must be

---

these utilitarian calculations prior to being admitted into the community.

made on the basis of what David Hume referred to as the "impartial spectator"; that is, we must adopt an appropriately disinterested vantage point while surveying the moral field in order to come to our decisions. Thus Singer's allegiance to Reason is made manifest on two fronts: the appeal to universalizability, and the value accorded to the objectivist or disinterested imaginary other. What the principle of equality ultimately amounts to, Singer suggests, is that "an interest is an interest whoever's interest it may be" (1993: 21). Hence Singer's appeal to objectivity is crucial to his belief that any creditable theory of ethics must be universal.

Second, Singer's utilitarianism collapses experiences of pain and pleasure to what might be called the ontological condition of interests-being. A creature's interests, in other words, are equivalent to its capacity to experience pain and pleasure; indeed, as Singer frames it, the capacity for suffering and enjoying things is a prerequisite for having interests at all, a condition that must be satisfied before we can speak of interests in any meaningful way (1993: 57).

It should be clear that the phrase "the capacity for suffering" is another way of referring to sentience. As Singer puts it, "the limit of sentience (using the term as a

convenient, if not strictly accurate, shorthand for the capacity to suffer or experience enjoyment or happiness) is the only defensible boundary of concern for the interests of others" (1993: 58). Again, Singer's appeal to the universal character of objectivity--and the objective character of universalizability--comes into play here, for he constructs the limit of sentience as the boundary separating moral concern from indifference. Sentience is a defensible boundary, he indicates, because it can be reduced to the ontological status of interests-being; that is, the tautological relation of sentience to interests-being is largely unchallenged. Nonetheless, the drawing of the ethical line at any point, and whatever arguments are used to support the appeal to objectivity and universalizability, will still evince signs of the ethical cartographer's political aspirations. That is, Singer's ethics is largely an attempt to extend moral concern to animals by a redrawing of the ethical boundaries. But this shows that universalizability is an illusion even for Singer's principle of equality, for only some species can attain the necessary level of sentient behavior that renders them morally relevant Others. Moreover, by framing his project for animal liberation as a social rather than an individual matter, Singer supports the immoral treatment of some beings

if this treatment will result in overall benefits for the majority of others. Thus his approach has the logical appeal found in an ethical system, but little of the responsibility for the Other of the moral relation. This is a point I take up in more detail in the following chapter.

The basic structure of Singer's argument, then, turns on the claim that beings that possess interests (or preferences) are beings with the right to ethical consideration. If a being is capable of experiencing pain (or, to be more precise, has the capacity to suffer), then that being has an interest in not being subjected to conditions or treatment that would cause it to suffer. As agents who can choose to prevent an animal from experiencing suffering, we are ethically enjoined to do what we can to alleviate other beings' misery. The animal's interests, once recognized, are sufficient in themselves to be framed as injunctions against mistreatment. Choice, in this context, is a legacy of our ethical nature, our condition in the world as subjects who can act on conscious decisions, deliberations, or rational considerations. Thus according to Singer, our sense of compulsion to treat animals ethically should come not from feelings of emotional attachment or sympathy, but from the suasive force of a utilitarian project of rational calculation. On this point

he is particularly adamant, denouncing those who would profess themselves "animal lovers" as failing to understand the centrality of reason in the construction of an animal ethics (1975, 1993). Singer's fidelity, I would suggest, is to the integrity of the utilitarian system he has erected, and not to the beings whose suffering is of a kind insufficient for bringing them inside the perimeters of the ethical kingdom drawn in his map.

### **Regan: The Inherent Worth of Animals**

In contrast to Singer, American philosopher Thomas Regan adopts a neo-Kantian position he calls the rights view, claiming that animals have ethical rights because they are beings possessing *inherent value* (1983, 1985, 1989). Whereas a consequentialist moral theory holds that an action is morally good or bad depending on the consequences that follow from that action, Regan's rights view claims that moral worth depends on whether or not the being in question is endowed with inherent value. Whereas for Singer it would be morally wrong to treat an animal cruelly if this would lead to more harm than good, for Regan the question of moral standing is determined not by results but by pre-conditions. This means that Regan tends to stress the individual over the group, while Singer, as indicated earlier, tends to

stress the interests of the group, or the aggregate, over the interests of the individual.

Regan's view stands at some distance from Singer's utilitarian philosophy. Indeed, Regan voices the standard criticism of utilitarian programs, arguing that consequentialist theories can sometimes force us to accept as ethically appropriate, behaviors for which we might feel an intuitive repugnance. Mobilizing examples that echo the exploits of characters created by Dostoyevsky, Regan argues that in certain circumstances utilitarians would be committed to approve of a murder if it could be shown that the killing would produce greater happiness than displeasure for all concerned parties. Hence utilitarians, Regan argues, will sometimes be forced to maintain that an evil means is justified in order to bring about a good end (1985: 21).

### **Animals and the Categorical Imperative**

This emphasis on means and ends shows why Regan's work is understood as being in the Kantian tradition. Kant argued, in one formulation of the categorical imperative, that we should never treat other moral agents merely as means, that people should "treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never

as a means only" (Kant, 1969: 54). According to Kant, we obey the moral law not out of self-interested motives, but for the sake of the moral law itself. Hence for Kant, moral agents are rational beings; that is, only rational beings have moral standing, or moral value, in their own right. As Kant explained:

Beings whose existence does not depend on our will but on nature, if they are not rational beings, have only a relative worth as means and are therefore called "things"; on the other hand, rational beings are designated "persons" because their nature indicates that they are ends in themselves, i.e., things which may not be used merely as means. (Kant, 1969: 51)

Kant argued that we only have direct duties to rational beings: people. Nonrational beings, such as animals, are owed only indirect duties--if they are owed duties at all. That is, we owe an animal kindness only insofar as treating it otherwise would be to harm a rational agent who has some interest in that creature (ownership, for example). In an oft-cited passage Kant wrote:

So far as animals are concerned, we have no direct duties. Animals are not self-conscious and are there merely as a means to an end. That end is man.... Our

duties to animals are merely indirect duties to mankind. (Kant, 1989: 23)

Regan accepts the notion of a categorical imperative but rejects Kant's insistence that only rational beings owe one another direct duties. Kant, Regan writes, is in error on a number of substantial points in his assessment of animals and their various capacities. For instance, Regan points out that many animals are self-conscious creatures, as numerous and recent zoological studies have shown. Such results, of course, are in direct contrast to Kant's views. Furthermore, Regan suggests, it is not clear how Kant moves from the issue of animals' lack of self-consciousness to the claim that they exist merely as a means to an end. In other words, Regan challenges the view that self-consciousness can be regarded as both an ontological condition, as well as a metaphysical justification for ethical treatment. As he puts it:

The plausibility of viewing animals as having value only if or as they serve human ends lessens as we begin to recognize that, like relevantly similar humans, animals have a life of their own that fares better or worse for them, logically independently of their utility value for others. It is thus exceedingly unclear how it could be correct to suppose that their

value is reducible, without remainder, to their utility to mankind, unless one is willing to make the same judgment in the case of humans like these animals in the relevant respects, which Kant is not. (1983: 178-79)

Animals, to put Regan's argument simply, are not merely means to human ends. This is the point at which Regan transforms Kant's categorical imperative into an argument favoring the moral treatment of animals. If people are to be treated as moral agents and not as means, and if the question of animal rationality is ultimately decided in the animals' favor (contrary to Kant's beliefs), then there is no logical way of defending against the claim that animals have inherent value (i.e., are covered by the categorical imperative). Regan suggests that the inherent value Kant ascribes to self-consciousness unfairly discriminates against beings whose mode of conscious life differs from ours. The key point, he seems to avow, is that somatic independence, regardless of one's utility (and hence disutility) to others, determines one's status as morally deserving. This argument presumes, however, that one's continued existence must in some fashion make a difference to oneself, that one's life might "fare better or worse" in a way that is meaningfully apprehended. Hence some specific

configuration of similarity to humans is still required in order to make inherent value logically consistent. That is, animals must apprehend that their lives would fare better or worse in accordance with the particular circumstances in which they find themselves. Things must make a difference to them one way or the other. Like Singer, then, Regan has introduced sentience through the backdoor. Singer smuggled sentience in as a condition of interest-being; now Regan has introduced it as a complementary faculty of inherent value. In both cases, there is an implicit concern with providing a logically consistent connection that will link up animal being with human nature in an easily identifiable fashion. Whether it is interests or inherent value, this bridging function is an integral component of the similarity thesis.

This concern with logical consistency, then, is an important part of Regan's position on inherent worth. Because humans and animals differ in such marked respects, the idea of a universal mode of inherent worth cannot easily be situated in the somatic form or cognitive structure of any particular species. But the idea that simply being-alive is the deciding factor that makes a being morally deserving is problematic, and Regan rejects this interpretation as it would raise the possibility that individual blades of grass might then be candidates for

inclusion in the sphere of ethics. Thus Regan suggests that only those beings who meet the criterion of being *the-subject-of-a-life* can be viewed as having inherent worth. Only such creatures, in other words, meet the similarity requirement that makes them morally relevant Others. He says:

Individuals are subjects of a life if they are able to perceive and remember; if they have beliefs, desires, and preferences; if they are able to act intentionally in pursuit of their desires or goals; if they are sentient and have an emotional life; if they have a sense of the future, including a sense of their own future; if they have a psychophysical identity over time; and if they have an individual experiential welfare that is logically independent of their utility for, and the interests of, others. (1983: 264)

The relevant similarity of those beings said to possess inherent value (i.e., those beings designated as morally relevant Others) is the *subject-of-a-life* criterion. It is this quality, Regan says, that must be considered when inquiring as to a being's moral status: is it the *subject-of-a-life*? But this argument seems at some points to confound the notion of inherence insofar as it is still an arbitrarily designed classification which, admittedly, Regan

has introduced to eliminate arbitrary decisions regarding animals' moral status. Is the subject-of-a-life criterion a precondition of inherent worth (and hence the foundation of moral relevance), or is inherent worth defined in respect of the subject-of-a-life criterion? It seems that one of Regan's difficulties is in finding a way to link his metaphysical neo-Kantian rights position with the empirical facts of biology even as he sidesteps the danger of deriving his ethical theory from science. I recognize that this is something of a chicken-and-the-egg criticism. But it remains somewhat murky how Regan determines the dividing line between inherent value and being the subject-of-a-life. In the end, such tautologies may be unavoidable.

### **Rationally Defective Ethics**

Nevertheless, Regan suggests that the subject-of-a-life standard is far more intelligible than the criteria found in other forms of ethical reasoning insofar as it shows how competing theories tend to draw unfair lines of demarcation around our own species. The rights view, he claims, is immune to this tactic. Regan makes the argument this way:

Attempts to limit the scope [of the rights view] to humans only can be shown to be rationally defective.

Animals, it is true, lack many of the abilities humans

possess. They can't read, do higher mathematics, build a bookcase, or make *baba ghanoush*. Neither can many human beings, however, and yet we don't (and shouldn't) say that they (these humans) therefore have less inherent value, less of a right to be treated with respect, than do others. It is the *similarities* between those human beings who most clearly, most non-controversially have such value...not our differences, that matter most. (1985:22)

There are two important points in this passage worth noting. First, Regan makes clear that limiting the scope of the rights view so as to exclude animals is *rationaly defective*; that is, such limitations as were introduced by Kant into the categorical imperative suffer a logical defect: they are extrinsic to the system, and thus introduce a kind of species-bias into the reasoning. But although this may be an important point for Regan's ethics, it is less clear how this would affect those who might reject Kant's program altogether. Is the defect an instance of ethical imperfection among those who mistreat animals, or a logical failing of the system? Regan seems to suggest (much as does Singer) that what compels us to ethical conduct is mainly a concern for rational consistency rather than a concern for the Other's welfare.

Second, Regan's emphasis on similarity over difference suggests the overriding interest his rights view (and Singer's utilitarianism) has with the extension of a universal concern with ethical theory building. Further, the question of similarity--various points of commonality between humans and animals--is also a claim for the moral relevance of the Darwinian thesis of evolutionary continuity. That is, Regan introduces an unsupported conclusion, that whatever is closely related to us in evolutionary terms is thereby entitled to greater moral consideration. But there is no justification for this claim which, as should be plain, has moved from a statement of fact to a statement of value. It may well be that the similarity thesis does capture something of the way in which moral obligations are experienced, a point suggested by philosopher Mary Midgley as I suggested in the Introduction (1983, 1978). Moreover, I suspect that there is something profoundly valuable in what I have called here the similarity thesis, or evolutionary continuity. But this point still needs the support of a logical demonstration to satisfy Regan's deductive approach. No demonstration of the claim that somatic similarity logically compels moral regard, however, is offered.

Regan argues that inherent value is a zero-sum proposition, that to be a creature with inherent value is to be a creature possessing inherent value in like proportion to all other beings. Inherent value, he argues, "belongs equally to those who are the experiencing subjects of a life" (1985: 23). Or, as Singer might say, an interest is an interest whoever's interest it might be. This is a strong illustration of the way in which Regan's views might easily be made more conducive to the Levinasian project I will describe in the next chapter. Yet where Regan draws closer to Levinas in his repudiation of utilitarian and self-serving motives, he then retreats into a continuity thesis rooted in his dedication to reason discursive ethics.

This retreat raises other difficulties, especially in connection with Regan's claim that animals have rights, a quasi-legal notion with which he struggles throughout his major text, The Case for Animal Rights (1983). Regan asks, for instance, whether we would be obliged to prevent a wolf from attacking a sheep (pp. 284ff), but concludes that since a wolf is not a moral agent (i.e., has no duties), it cannot violate the sheep's right not to suffer a painful and violent death. Hence we are not enjoined (even as moral agents) to intervene. The logic of rights would compel us to watch impassively as the sheep is slaughtered, our

responsibility, apparently, meted out not to the suffering Other but to the internal rigor of the ethical system.

And yet, one cannot help but wonder how the sheep might feel about this line of reasoning. Its misery, it seems, is guaranteed in our fidelity to ethics. I am not trying to trivialize the situation, but trying instead to make evident the absurdity of the conclusion.<sup>5</sup> The problem can be made clearer by asking how Regan would argue if we replaced the sheep with a person; given that the wolf is bereft of duties regardless of the moral status of its victim, would we have no obligation to save another human from attack? I suspect that Regan would introduce ancillary reasons why, in the case of an endangered moral agent, we are obligated to intercede. But the original situation turned only on the moral status of the wolf, not the moral agency (or what Regan calls 'patiency') of the victim. For the wolf, nothing has changed in the realm of duties, obligations, and moral relations. Whether it attacks a sheep or a human, it has not risen to the plateau of moral agency. In the case of animals that are enmeshed in the sphere of human social life (for instance, farm animals, zoo animals, pets) the

---

<sup>5</sup> "That lambs dislike great birds of prey does not seem strange: only it gives no ground for reproaching these birds of prey for bearing off little lambs" (Nietzsche, 1966: 44). I doubt that Regan would see himself in the Nietzschean tradition, and yet the parallels are remarkable.

issue of rights might seem reasonable, though only because we are invariably speaking of human moral obligations in relation to these groups of animals. In the natural environment, where prey and predator carry on their affairs in mutual nonmoral indifference, talk of animal rights appears more tenuous. As Plumwood has suggested, "the concept of right-holding is impossible to apply in the context of...a natural ecosystem, where it obliges us to police nature" (1993: 172). Certainly we cannot become nature's moral constabulary. The legalistic foundations of "rights-talk" (Nelkin, 1992) compels us, in the name of the Law, to just such behavior.

As with Singer's utilitarian approach, Regan's rights-view leads us to value the principle(s) above the victim. It also asks that we search out some essential property by which a being is made a legitimate subject (or patient) of moral concern. Moral obligation, by this reasoning, devolves into respect for moral value, not respect for the individual (human or animal). As with Singer's views, Regan's arguments seem also to collapse into tautology.

Whereas Singer broadens the utilitarian calculus first described by Mill to bring animals into the moral community, Regan expands Kant's categorical imperative to include non-rational beings, also bringing animals into the moral

community. Both writers, in other words, rework traditional ethical theories to show that the inclusion of animals was implicit in the classical formulations upon which each has elaborated. In one sense, then, there is nothing especially new about Singer's "new ethics", nothing especially novel about an animal rights philosophy at all. Indeed, both Singer and Regan see themselves as having demonstrated that at least two major ethical philosophies already contained the seeds of animal liberation within them. These philosophies only required the application of rational argumentation by modern thinkers to begin the process of germination.

### **Not Naming the Animals**

Both Singer and Regan establish implicit categories of ethically deserving animals largely by way of omitting complete classifications of creatures from their discussions. That is, in the texts of both writers, the examples that are brought forward ordinarily are of mammals, though sometimes birds (such as factory hens) are mentioned. But few other species are regularly discussed. These omissions follow logically from the rigorously constructed theories about suffering, sentience, and rights each writer endorses; that is, even as Singer and Regan are concerned

with bringing animals into the ethical community, their programs function simultaneously to debar some creatures from entering. Regan's subject-of-a-life criterion is generally more narrow than Singer's capacity-to-suffer standard. Nonetheless, it is apparent that for both philosophers, insects, amphibians, reptiles, and myriad other life forms would be relegated to the ethical hinterlands. Only some divisions of creatures will be permitted to cross the border.

Singer's invocation of interests, and Regan's subject-of-a-life standard, suggest that only those animals that are capable of a certain level of consciousness could be considered recipients of ethical consideration. But the question of animal consciousness, a topic of considerable debate in the animal sciences and psychology, has philosophic dimensions that would lead us far afield were we to attempt the resolution of its many outstanding questions here. For present purposes it is sufficient to note that the animal rights' general position is that when we operationalize the idea behind the capacity to suffer, for instance, the issue of animal awareness or animal consciousness is mainly settled. In other words, Singer suggests that a certain level of awareness (or sentience) is necessary before we can consider a creature as capable of

advancing a genuine claim to possessing interests. Awareness, consciousness, sentience, suffering, and interests are thus tied together as the conditions defining animals deserving ethical treatment. There may indeed be a tautology here--sentience defined as the capacity to suffer, the capacity to suffer taken as the central emblem of sentience--but this is a point I will leave aside for now. The key issue is that Singer argues that determining the dividing line is a matter of determining the point at which suffering occurs.

But the means for making these determinations are elusive, for suffering is principally an anthropomorphic construction. Hence Singer himself concedes that sifting through the scale of life in search of a definitive border beyond which ethical considerations cease to apply is a vexing problem, and one that may best be settled according to personal preference. For his part, "somewhere between a shrimp and an oyster seems as good a place to draw the line as any, and better than most" (1978: 179).<sup>6</sup> But this line,

---

<sup>6</sup> Curiously, Descartes seems to have anticipated Singer on this point, writing to the Marquess of Newcastle that distinguishing animal behavior from human invention was at times, admittedly, difficult. Nonetheless, Descartes insisted, the differences were crucial:

The most that one can say is that though the animals do not perform any action which shows us that they think, still, since the organs of their body are not very different from ours, it may be conjectured that there

however difficult it may be difficult to assault, is still Singer's preference, and not the expression of a logical conclusion.

Such equivocation as Singer demonstrates is part and parcel of animal rights writing. An additional example may help make this observation clear. In a recent work on animal rights philosophy, Barbara Noske complains that "social scientists generally feel no scruples about lumping together millions of animal species under the amorphous heading 'animal' (meaning *non-human*)" (Noske, 1997: 83). She goes on to explain that

although they do not exclude animals from their sphere of interest they do not hesitate to make confident statements about animals, especially about what they are not. How do they know them so well? Bohannan is one of the few anthropologists who has argued that what animals are or aren't should be a matter of examination

---

is attached to those organs some thoughts such as we experience in ourselves, but of a very much less perfect kind. To which I have nothing to reply except that if they thought as we do, they would have an immortal soul like us. This is unlikely, because there is no reason to believe it of some animals without believing it of all, and many of them such as oysters and sponges are too imperfect for this to be credible. (1970:)

Apparently there is something about mollusks that renders them so resistant to our powers of empathy that we are unhesitant about stripping them of souls or ethical value.

not of definition. But most social scientists are quite content to leave the study of animals to the natural sciences with their subject-object approach to nature and to animals. In their turn the social scientists appear to be surprisingly uncritical in adopting as their own the biobehavioural image of animals and animalness. (1997:83)

This passage would appear to be a signal to readers that Noske is about to examine the importance of how different species of animals might be regarded by an animal ethic informed by the eco-feminist approach she pursues. Yet having chastised her colleagues for their apparent moral indifference to the majority of the earth's creatures, her argument moves forward with no examples of moral obligation to creatures other than mammals. Instead, she goes on to develop her critique in a different direction, suggesting that our ignorance about animals, as this is marked by the exceptional inclusiveness of the word *animal*, has left them vulnerable to the de-animation of living spirit that is central to current thinking in the bio-behavioral sciences. This is a valuable point, and Noske's arguments regarding the de-animation of animals in science are certainly worth noting. But there is something frustrating about her apparent refusal to address the complaint she raises. Just

at that point where she appears to be on the verge of dealing with the issue of ethical boundaries in animal rights philosophizing, she draws back abruptly, retreating into the security of the very strategy she has admonished. We are left with a series of difficult questions. How are we to think about animals outside of the ethical cartography of the animal rights movement without doing disservice to the diversity and complexity of animal life forms? Can we refuse all boundaries between categories of living things as possessing any degree of moral relevance? And if such boundaries are valuable in a moral context, what would be required to properly identify them? Can the *Is* of taxonomy become the *Ought* of morality?

It is probably impossible to avoid transforming taxonomic divisions into ethical borders; indeed, our very survival depends on making such distinctions on a continual basis. But we should also be aware that in making these

---

<sup>7</sup> "Vegetarians, too," writes Derrida, "partake of animals, even of men." He goes on to point out that vegetarians practice a different mode of denegation. The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the nonliving, man or animal, but since *one must* eat in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there's no other definition of the good, *how* for goodness sake should one eat well? And what does this imply? What is eating? How is this metonymy of introjection to be regulated. (Derrida, 1995: 282) As Derrida points out, the distinction between animal and plant "flesh" is itself suspect, a social construction,

distinctions, we risk embracing some version of the naturalistic fallacy. Taking taxonomic diagrams as representative of ethical duties is to impose rules of moral order on naturally occurring differences. The important point to bear in mind while examining this practice, I would suggest, is not simply that order must be sought. Rather, the problem is that following its imposition we may be tempted to "discover" that order as given in nature, and thereby delude ourselves into thinking that ethical conduct is merely the working out of certain biological facts. Although there are obvious mutual interpenetrations between the biological and the moral, one cannot merely be read off against the other. It is not clear, for instance, whether oysters are beings lacking moral value, or whether humans are the sorts of beings who feel no compulsion to extend

---

perhaps, in which beginning and end points are determined arbitrarily by the consumer/philosopher. Deconstruction, applied to ecological ethics, decenters the organism from a central or privileged position; no animal is the author of its own being, not even of its somatic form. All life is produced in the nexus of ecological relations by which the system of life is preserved. Hence, whichever way we turn for sustenance, the animal other is all about us. As Clark writes, "we cannot not assimilate the other," for "what 'we' are is irreducible to a complex spectrum of incorporation and interiorization" (1997: 176). The futility of ethical cartography is here indicated in drawing out of the inter-subjective connections by which all organic forms are held together.

Finally, an interesting discussion of the many social facets of meat and meat eating is found in Fiddes, 1991. Carol Adams's eco-feminist position (1990) is also valuable reading in this context.

moral regard to oysters. Perhaps it is not that the animal has the responsibility to present a claim for inclusion in the ethical community, but that we are obliged to do what we can to interrogate our moral responses to the creature.

The tendency in animal rights texts to ignore the substantial differences among species may be explained further by the theoretical expediency of the writers' agenda: the need to reconfigure animals in terms of their likeness to humans. This reconfiguration is driven by the belief that in demonstrating how animals and humans share biological, emotional, and cognitive qualities, readers of animal rights texts will be more easily persuaded to accept that animals have a legitimate claim to membership in the ethical community. If it is easier to sympathize with a dog mourning his master's death by loyally attending at his graveside than it is to kindle emotional feelings for nets of fish being scooped from the ocean, then these are the sorts of images animal advocates will promote. From a rhetorical standpoint, the tactic of focusing nearly exclusively on mammals, therefore, is unsurprising. But what is remarkable is that such images as helpless puppies being carried into the experimenter's laboratory are filled with implicit sentimentality--despite the fact that animal

rights philosophers such as Singer and Regan strive hard to present their arguments as decisively logical programs.

I would suggest that the central problem here is not that Singer and Regan have ignored the non-mammalian domain, but that they have ignored their own omissions. It seems inescapable that species whose behavioral repertoires are similar to our own have some additional moral force in their relations with us, some claim on our moral sympathies. And yet, even in stating this, there is plainly some evaluative component involved in claiming for one species over another a manifest similarity with people. That is, similarities and differences are often socially constructed, and although some animals might resemble us (being warm-blooded, for instance), so too they will differ from us in significant ways. What seems most important is not that mammals are somatically configured so as to resemble us, but that in the eyes of mammals (and, in some cases, creatures of other species), there is a plea that eludes the taxonomic logic of the similarity thesis, and that reaches us at an emotional level. There is that about the animal Other's visage that is a profoundly emotional interpellation.

## **A Question of Sympathy**

But for most animal rights philosophers, this emotional attunement is more epiphenomenal than central. The application of reason to ethical thinking is the decisive issue for animal activists. This follows from the animal advocates' view that expressions of sentimental concern for animals undermine the program for animal liberation by bringing ridicule upon the movement. As both Singer and Regan are quick to point out, neither considers himself especially attached to, nor interested in, animals. In keeping with their respective aims of establishing wholly logical ethical systems, both writers are insistent that the ethical treatment for animals must be based entirely on rational principles.

Indeed, sympathy for animals has formed only a small part of the history of the modern animal rights movement. Considerably more important to the structure of contemporary movements for animal liberation than sentimental or sympathetic attitudes is the articulation of a political agenda which defines human relations to other creatures in a social rather than a personal context. To feel sympathy for animals is one thing, but crusading in the context of a public forum for legislative change, educational reform, and economic sanctions is another matter entirely. Although

alliances between advocates of these positions are sometimes forged, the gulf between animal sympathy and animal liberation is bridged only by bonds of expediency. Animal liberation is marked by the argument that the division between sympathy and reason must be patrolled so as to prevent sentiment from making its way across the divide.

This division defines animal rights philosophy as a form of rational-discursive ethics different from sentiment-driven quests for an understanding of our primal moral condition. Contemporary animal rightists anchor their arguments entirely on the supporting structures of Reason: universalizability, reciprocity, calculability, contractuality, foundationalism, and so on. Yet these abstractions, though important tactics in the overall strategy of animal rights thinking, may serve simultaneously to justify the "abyss of non-comprehension" that separates us from the earth's other beings (Berger, 1980). While such non-comprehension is attendant upon the discursivity of Reason, our relations to animals, by contrast, often have a non-discursive, passionate quality. "The notion of 'an animal'," writes philosopher Mary Midgley, "is a deeply and incurably emotive one" (1992: 38). The very fact of the non-discursive forms of relations people form with animals would seem to speak directly in favor of acknowledging the

structure of those relations being framed by emotional bonds and affections.

An ethical code that sifts through a moral quandary in order to calculate rationally the relative status of good and evil, is destined to turn to those abstractions that are necessary to preserve the integrity of the system from the potential "contamination" of sentiment. "In the garden of Reason," writes Bauman, "sentiments are weeds" (1995: 54). Sentiment cannot be codified; it therefore renders itself an unwelcome presence in the task of ethical system-building. As Levinas tells us, when we act from beyond the external conventions dictated by our ethics, and respond to the unspoken demand of the Other, the self accomplishes a "breaking through its form" that presents us with a primal moral scene, one where we encounter the Other without any socially-constituted obligations mediating our relationship (Levinas, 1987: 20). When we awaken to the face of the Other, Levinas writes, we awaken to the birth of our own moral selfhood. Sentiment, passion, emotion--these are the forms of being-for in which our moral nature is constituted.

Sympathy implies connection, a metaphoric touch in which the parties come into mutual embrace, an expression of one's being-for the Other. Reason, by contrast, emphasizes the need for conceptual distance suggesting the urgency of

dominion. In the context of the modern animal rights movement, reason provides animal advocates with a framework within which to organize and advance their arguments, but it does so by emphasizing at the same time the potential discord between the ethical and the moral. Reason provides *compelling* evidence for the internal consistency of the ethical conventions under investigation, while sentiment has no power to compel from within a system of conventional ethics. Yet morality, as Bauman has put it, "is enclosed in the frame of sympathy, of the willingness to serve, to do good, to self-sacrifice for the sake of the Other" (1995: 60). In making this claim, Bauman follows Levinas, saying that to take moral responsibility, as opposed to fulfilling ethical duties, means that in being-for the other we have put the Other's welfare ahead of our self-interests and ahead of all interests in reciprocation. Clearly this way of conceptualizing the moral condition challenges the linear calculations of ethics, the logic of reciprocity, and the certainty of foundational and universalizable principles. When we divest our notions of morality of all expressions of sentiment and sympathy, we effectively reduce the experience of being-for to a condition of being-with, one that permits the elevation of rational self-interest to the apex of ethical reason.

Many animal activists not only conceptualize reason as the antithesis of emotion, but actively advocate against sentiment. Hence the uneasy alliance between animal activists and those whom Peter Singer refers to derisively as "animal lovers" (Singer, 1975). Contemporary animal activism as it is articulated in the major texts of the animal rights movement is not about love, sympathy, or affection; it is a sustained philosophical, social, and political argument seeking to reform--or restructure--contemporary ethical thinking. Its disavowal of affection and sympathetic feeling for animals is central to its overall program. As Regan has put it:

Since, in order to arrive at the best theory of our duties to one another, we must recognize our equal inherent value as individuals, reason--not sentiment, not emotion--reason compels us to recognize the equal inherent value of...animals and, with this, their equal right to be treated with respect. (1985: 23-24)

Regan expresses a view that is found consistently throughout the major texts of animal rights activists: that due consideration of the rational basis for including animals in the ethical kingdom will lead all reasonable people to conclude that non-human beings deserve moral compassion. It is reason, and not emotion, that we must

appeal to in order to find an adequate basis for a philosophy of animal liberation, a form of reason that appeals directly to universality and foundationalism.

The principle of universality holds that it is possible to discover rules, laws, or ethical precepts that will meet the standard of the exceptionless system, and that all people will be governed by these rules because they are themselves constituted from similar blueprints. In this sense, the search for the universal in ethics is the search for an epistemological bedrock upon which an ethical code can be built that will remain impervious to the tremors engendered by cultural variations. So too the search for foundations is ultimately a political quest for a way of ensuring conformity. People can not be trusted always to do what is demanded by the State--what is constituted by the dominant order as morally appropriate. The autonomous moral subject can not in herself be regarded as possessing sufficient ethical acumen to follow unflinchingly the correct and necessary avenues that lead to virtue. Hence the rational foundations of ethics must be heteronomous; that is, we must judge our ethical conduct not in accordance with its fidelity to our natural sympathies, but in respect of the correspondence our behaviors reach in replicating the principles laid out in the system. This way of proceeding

can be found in many classic texts on moral philosophy, such as Kurt Baier's The Moral Point of View:

A man cannot be said to have adopted the moral point of view unless he is prepared to treat the moral rules as principles rather than mere rules of thumb, that is, to do things on *principle* rather than merely act purposively, merely to aim at a certain end. And, furthermore, he must act on rules which are meant for everybody, and not merely for himself or some formed group. (1958: 159)<sup>8</sup>

Animal advocacy, as it is constituted in the animal rights literature, is as convincing as it is logically rigorous; indeed, the persuasiveness of the animal rights agenda is ultimately derived entirely from the force of compulsion that logically valid and sound arguments can achieve. In heteronomous ethical systems, necessity

---

<sup>8</sup> Baier's arguments echo those of Kant who wrote:

An action performed from duty does not have its moral worth in the purpose which is to be achieved through it but in the maxim by which it is determined. Its moral value, therefore, does not depend on the realization of the object of the action but merely on the principle of volition by which the action is done without any regard to the objects of the faculty of desire...it is clear that the purposes we may have for our actions and their effects as ends and incentives of the will cannot give the actions any unconditional and moral worth. (1969: 19)

This separation of the principle from the intent--the conventions of the ethical system from the impulse for moral

replaces obligation; that is, fidelity to the logical reasoning embodied in ethics becomes more fundamental than attending to the sense of responsibility that arises from the moral condition. As Bauman has argued:

Most ethical arguments followed unstintingly Kant's invalidation of emotions as morally potent factors: it has been axiomatically assumed that feelings, much as acting out of affections, have no moral significance--only choice, the rational faculty, and the decisions it dictates can reflect upon the actor as a moral person.... Reason had to be un-emotional, as emotions were un-reasonable; and morality was cast fairly and squarely in that un-feeling dominion of reason.

(Bauman, 1993: 67-68)

The separation of the experience of individual sympathy from the call for social reform parallels the differences between emotion and reason. Clearly our understanding of animal rights must be shaped by an awareness of the political forces involved in the development of a public consciousness predisposed to view animals as beings deserving of various kinds of moral kindness. Yet it must also take account of the fact that the animal rights position has only the

---

concern--is one of those features of Western moral thought to which Levinas objects most forcibly.

surface appearance of a radical emancipatory project; in fact, the animal rights view is entirely consistent with the structures and conventional traditions in ethical theory. The putative rights of animals may be a novel theme for debate in ethical philosophy; yet the nature of the arguments developed within the animal rights literature are not themselves especially novel. With its acceptance of the primacy of rationality, its disavowal of emotional foundations, and its insistence on the heteronomous nature of ethical conventions, the animal rights movement is a decisively modern notion.<sup>9</sup>

### **Competing Paradigms of Emancipation**

Although Singer and Regan articulate the most well-known defenses of the thesis that animals deserve ethical treatment, the movement for animal liberation is a

---

<sup>9</sup> Many contemporary writers continue to accept the legitimacy of the animal rights view only to the extent that it is couched in the discourse of rationality. John Livingston's otherwise excellent book Rogue Primate (1994), for example, adopts this view. Livingston's determination to show that animal activists are not the "raving, roaring lunatics" many of their detractors allege, is consistent with his approval of the "coolly rational" and "scrupulously scholarly" tone found in Peter Singer's and Bernard Rollin's works on animal rights. Yet it is activists like Singer who are the most vociferous critics of the sentimentalists, and anyone who derides Singer (or Rollin, or Regan) as an emotional romantic is, I feel, guilty of misrepresenting the animal rights position.

multivocal project. And, as with any social movement, there is ongoing disagreement among the different activists and writers who profess to be offering a definitive position. Andrew Linzey (1987) and Stephen Clark (1977), for instance, take issue with the avowed a-theistic tone found in both Singer's and Regan's approaches. Linzey and Clark have attempted to show that Christianity, in particular, may be more compatible with animal rights thinking than is generally allowed. Their arguments, which gather what strength they have from the claim that there is nothing in Christian thought that necessarily forces the theist to reject the moral claims of animals, suffer the obvious weakness of failing to demonstrate how mere compatibility can be pressed into service as a foundation for philosophical argument. It may be possible to finesse conventional Christian doctrine into various configurations that lead one to conclude that theology and animal liberation evince a number of interesting points of similarity. But these exercises have not yet led to a rewriting of Catholic doctrine, for instance, which continues to insist that the animal rights movement is a case where "sensibility has far outrun sense" (Regan and Singer, 1989: 133).

Feminist critiques of the animal rights movement have also made their way forward, and though such positions remain relatively marginal, they present an important challenge to the masculinist analyses found in the works of Singer and Regan. Josephine Donovan (1990), Carol Adams (1990), Carolyn Merchant (1990), Karen Warren (1990), and Val Plumwood (1993) have all claimed that the principal issue underlying the abuse of animals is patriarchy, and that animal rights activists, the majority of whom are men, have failed to address this matter. Couching their respective analyses in both critical theory and in feminist readings of history, each of these writers has indicated that objectivist, male-centered notions of science continue to influence the way that the animal rights movement addresses the matter of animal suffering. The feminist critique, therefore, comes much closer to articulating a reevaluation of sentiment than does the work of Singer and Regan.

For instance, Josephine Donovan argues that the contemporary animal rights movement is influenced heavily by an Enlightenment epistemology that privileges abstract reasoning over and above identification and empathy. As she puts it, many of the leading animal rights activists are more concerned with the "suppression/denial of emotional

knowledge" than with recognizing the affective bond between animals and people that is an important aspect of feminist theorizing (1990: 365). To claim that arguments for animal liberation must be grounded in the canons of reason is to accept the dualism of heart and mind, and to relegate emotions to a 'lower', animalistic level in the hierarchy of knowledge. Patriarchy, she therefore indicates, continues to express an understanding of the human-animal relation which, even in the course of articulating an animal rights ethic, is forced to appeal to the very Cartesian dualism it should reject. The split between mind and body, she argues, is tantamount to a split between reason and emotion. Hence according to Donovan, there is an explicit division within the animal rights movement maintained along gender lines.

Carol Adams makes an even stronger argument connecting patriarchy to the abuse of animals, suggesting that "a structure of overlapping but absent referents links violence against women and [the mistreatment of] animals" (1990: 42). Through the structure of the absent referent--that which is simultaneously present and absent--patriarchal values have become institutionalized in our culture. Just as meat serves as an absent referent for the animal (the animal being made absent for the meat to exist), descriptions of cultural violence against women treat women as absent, as in

"spousal violence," where no victim is identified, and the violence itself is transformed into a grammatical subject with no apparent object (see also Fraser, 1989). The structure of the absent referent is a product of oppression, for it works to naturalize relations of domination.

Violence against animals is thus a part of the continuum of violence that is covertly sanctioned by patriarchal values.

Adams sees the relationship between animal abuse and violence against women as co-dependent social practices which, in constructing the bases for a patriarchal politics of entitlement, follow a similar cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption (47ff.). In the initial phase of objectification the other is reified and stripped of subjectivity. The other is then fragmented, "severed from its ontological meaning" (47). Finally, the other/object is consumed: literally, in the case of animals, metaphorically in the case of women. Consumption, Adams argues, "is the fulfillment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity" (47). Consumption, both metaphoric and literal, is a form of fulfillment which demands of its subject the kind of distancing and control that is promised in capitalist-patriarchal formations of domination. It subsumes the Other to the Self, reduces the alterity of the Other to the mere complement of the ego, an

instance of what Levinas will describe as the "hegemony of the Same" (1962: 12). It is fulfillment, then, insofar as it serves and supports particular relations of power.

In Adams's analysis--as in Donovan's mentioned above--the driving force behind the critique is an attack on specific conventions of rationality: the denigration of sentiment in favor of a positivistic form of reason, and the objectifying and fragmenting practices embodied in empirical science. Hence while certain feminist positions are directed against the mistreatment of animals, they can be read also as incisive criticisms of the work of philosophers like Singer and Regan. More to the point, these analyses suggest that our ethical obligations for animals cannot be entirely contained in the framework that rational discourse provides; rather, it is necessary for us to move outside of the borders that Reason inscribes around us and other beings.

But to overlook entirely the persuasive power of the arguments advanced by Peter Singer and Tom Regan would be to overlook as well the persuasive force of logical reasoning as a way of making our way through the tangled thickets of ethical debate. There is a practical sense in which Singer and Regan are correct, for if one follows Singer's preference utilitarianism to its zenith, and if one allows

that Regan's rights view captures accurately the meaning of inherent value, then there seems no good reason for denying animals a place in those theories. Indeed, on questions of using animals in medical and scientific experiments, for example, Singer and Regan provide entirely compelling reasons for accepting that animals warrant ethical consideration.

But these arguments for animal liberation are pragmatically compelling only to the extent that discursive ethics has the power to influence our thinking and direct our behavior. That is, only to the extent that we are prepared to privilege the logical force of abstract arguments will we be equally prepared to alter centuries of convention, habit, and tradition. This is a more dubious prospect. The difficulty, I would suggest, is that *the impersonal logic of ethical reasoning, disguises and conceals the personal need for moral responsibility.* As Michael Pritchard has commented:

We may attempt to step outside ourselves and dispassionately try to support those [ethical] propositions from an external, objective point of view. However...no such attempt has yet succeeded, and with good reason. If external justification requires us imaginatively to strip ourselves of our moral

sentiments so that we may view them 'objectively', what resources will we be able to call on to conduct the examination? To do justice to the subject, we must employ our moral sensibilities, including, as they do, our sentiments. There is no neutral ground. If it is to be of any practical use for us, moral philosophy must be an 'inside job', however much one may wish otherwise. (1991: 10)

It is as if moral autonomy has been colonized by ethical heteronomy. And heteronomous ethics, as Levinas indicates, amounts to an abdication of moral responsibility. The confusion this creates is hardly insignificant, for the demands that this view of morality places upon us seem impossibly severe. And this confusion grows as we additionally burden our consciences with scenes of animal distress. The difficulty, one is tempted to suggest, is not with our ethical systems, for these can be shown with ease to be arbitrarily designed so as to exclude those Others who, for whatever political, religious, or metaphysical prejudices we wish to define as possessing no moral standing. To say, as Singer and Regan do, that two of Western philosophy's most venerable ethical systems *when interpreted correctly* actually compel us to include animals is hardly surprising; each age, it seems, adopts the ethics

it can afford. As Montaigne argued, "laws remain respected not because they are just but because they are laws" (1987: 1216). The main issue, I would suggest, turns on justice rather than on correctly interpreting the implications of a particular ethical code. "Every time that something comes to pass or turns out well," Derrida writes, "every time that we placidly apply a good rule to a particular case, to a correctly subsumed example, according to a determinant judgment, we can be sure that law (*droit*) may find itself accounted for, but certainly not justice" (1990: 947).

Singer's ethical cartography delineates borders between species on the basis of their interest-being essence. In this respect, Singer's approach to animal liberation is part and parcel of the general application of codes and conventions to ethical system building that characterizes legislative developments in Western thought. But morality is not about map-making. Morality is transgressive, diffuse, and even ambivalent. Whereas ethical duties are specifiable, moral responsibility remains ambiguous. In attempting to circumscribe our relations to animal Others in terms of a heteronomous ethics divested of emotional influence and sympathetic feeling, animal rights activists have merely reproduced the hegemonically inscribed structure of ethical reasoning, drawing upon the Cartesian separation

of heart and mind. To bring animals into the moral community by according them rights may be a legislative coup, but it will not address the more salient question of how our feelings of responsibility toward animals should be valued.

What I would like to propose is an alternative model for thinking about our relations to animals in the context of moral concern. This model suggests that too often we confuse ethics with morality, and thereby overlook the possibility that ethical systems--such as Singer's utilitarianism--despite their self-enclosed logic, sometimes fail to consider the role that sentiment plays in moral debate. This alternative model, then, suggests that before we can begin to grapple with the larger issues of animal mistreatment, we need to look closely at the different ways in which we might conceptualize the moral relation. To put it simply, how might we think about animals as moral subjects rather than merely as the objects of ethical theory?

The work of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas is the approach I would like to offer as an alternative to the sort of reason discursive ethical systems that have been proposed by Singer and Regan. I do not want to pretend that what Levinas has to offer closes the book entirely on the

question of animal moral status; indeed, when he has been asked directly about the application of his views to the study of animal rights, Levinas has tendered only provisional ideas (Llewelyn, 1991; Wright, 1988). Rather, I am suggesting that Levinas's ideas can provide us with a starting point from which a discussion of our potential obligations to animals might move forward. And while it is both difficult and ambitious to tease out of Levinas's writings a truly cogent analysis of moral obligation, the effort to work through the issues he raises is itself instructive. In trying to talk about animals and morality in the same sentence, as it were, one is faced with centuries of prejudicial disinterest. Indeed, facing the past, and facing the Other, may well be the point at which we must begin, not the goal to which we aspire.

**CHAPTER TWO:  
FACING THE MORALITY OF  
THE ANIMAL-OTHER**

No emotion can be restrained by the true knowledge of good and evil in so far as it is true, but only in so far as it is considered as an emotion.

- Baruch Spinoza

Emotions, the anti-social drive which knows no distinction between right and wrong, cannot be dealt with by the *voice* of reason, by knowledge as the argument and dissemination of truth; or, rather, it can be dealt with in such a way only in cases where knowledge itself becomes an "affect."

- Zygmunt Bauman

The self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities such as those of the family, the neighborhood, the city, and the tribe.

- Kenneth Gergen

Reuters News Agency

BOURNEMOUTH, England-- A man pinned under a car by a hit-and-run driver was rescued after his dog ran almost two kilometres to raise the alarm, ambulance workers said yesterday.

Russell Warren, 33, of the southern English town of Bournemouth, was walking his black boxer Missie when a speeding car ran up the pavement and hit him.

His leg was shattered and he had several broken ribs, but the driver fled. Missie, also injured, went for help.

"It seems incredible that the driver just left Russell there," his aunt June Griffiths said. "To be abandoned by a human and saved by a dog seems to sum up modern society." June 2, 1993

### **Legislating Animal Rights**

The main currents of political and philosophical thought in the West have run consistently against the idea of granting moral consideration to non-human creatures (Ryder, 1989). Even so, the claim that animals deserve moral regard was advanced by many historical figures, including Pythagoras, Plutarch, and Montaigne (Montaigne, 1987; Tester, 1989; Thomas, 1983). But these pleas for a

more humane attitude to animals have traditionally echoed in the margins of society, and the notion that animals warrant serious ethical treatment has rarely moved from the social periphery to a central spot in either political or philosophical debate (Fuller, 1949). That animals are deserving of ethical regard--especially in the form of rights--is a strictly modern idea rooted in the Enlightenment project which saw in the success of scientific practices, a possible means for making ethical philosophy more accountable to rationality (Channell, 1991; Thomas, 1983; Singer, 1995).

The argument that animal rights is a product of modernist sensibilities gains additional support from the observation that it was not until the eighteen-hundreds that legislation first appeared prohibiting certain forms of animal mistreatment such as cock-fighting and bear-baiting (Bauman, 1987; Darnton, 1984; Malcolmson, 1982; Tester, 1991; Thomas, 1983). Much of this legislation was intended to control the everyday practices of the lower classes, of course, and as such it should not be construed as a genuine demonstration that government officials had suddenly become convinced that cruelty to laboring beasts was immoral. As Matthew Arnold (and others in the so-called "culture and civilization" tradition) argued, it was incumbent upon the

state to regulate the everyday pleasures of the working classes in order to prevent the disruption of the social equilibrium (Arnold, 1960). According to Arnold, for instance, bear-baiting and cock-fighting were indicative of a debased working-class consciousness; what was ethically questionable was not the treatment meted out to the animal victims, but the psychological and emotional consequences such practices would have on participants and viewers. Indeed, the main question was really how these consequences would then translate into potentially disruptive or disintegrative forces that might impinge upon the social order. Hence the regulation, and eventual elimination, of certain working-class pleasures was deemed necessary to ensure that cultural authority would be respected. Arnold was concerned about animal mistreatment not because he felt particular sympathy for animals, but because he worried that popular cultural practices of this sort might lead to political insurrection (see also Bauman, 1987; Storey, 1993).

Although the political lobbying that influenced the English Parliament to draft anti-cruelty bills occasionally issued from people who expressed genuine concern for animal welfare irrespective of its social and cultural implications, most of the debates focused on the social and

political consequences to which animal cruelty was thought to lead.<sup>1</sup> When Lord Erskine rose in the House in 1809 to argue in favor of an ill-fated bill barring cruelty to animals, he claimed that "the moral sense...cannot but have a most powerful effect upon our feelings and sympathies for one another," arguing that cruelty to animals "destroys every security of human life, by hardening the heart for the perpetuation of all crimes" (in Tester, 1989: 105). The

---

<sup>1</sup> The view that we owe animals kindness in order to foster more compassionate attitudes towards others humans had been expressed by a number of writers prior to the appearance of anti-cruelty legislation in England in the eighteenth-hundreds. Montaigne had advocated this position in his essays "On Cruelty," and "An Apology for Raymond Sebond", in the sixteenth-century, while Kant offered a similar perspective in his Lectures on Ethics.

Indeed, the view that cruelty to animals is really a form of cruelty to people is today most commonly associated with Kant who argued that we have no direct duties to animals because animals are not self-conscious beings but merely means to an end. We should be kind to animals, he argued, only because our duties to animals are "indirect duties towards humanity." That is, "we have duties towards the animals because thus we cultivate the corresponding duties towards human beings" (in Regan and Singer, 1989: 25; 25-26).

Kant's belief that kindness to animals was necessary in order to foster kindness towards other people led him to cite with approval an English practice that prohibited butchers and doctors from sitting on juries "because they are accustomed to the sight of death" (cited in Singer and Regan, 1989: 24). However, the historian Keith Thomas has commented that there is neither evidence nor legal authority for this idea, despite the fact that "it was held throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by scores of commentators who should have known better" (1983: 295). This seems to be a case where the truth or falsity of the tale is far less important than the complex of ideas that gave rise to it.

need to formulate bills preventing cruelty to animals was, in Erskine's view, motivated by the need to ensure the preservation of social order; to take action against criminal behavior; and to impress upon the working classes the necessity of embracing the genteel sensibilities favored by the aristocratic members of society.<sup>2</sup> Efforts to deal with animal cruelty with legislation threw into stark relief the class stratification in English society though often at the expense of avoiding demonstrations of genuine moral concerns about animal suffering. At stake were the privileges of the elite classes, not the plight of other creatures. As one of Erskine's Parliamentary opponents, William Windham, argued, Erskine's "Bill for preventing Cruelty to Animals" should have been entitled "A Bill for harassing and oppressing certain classes among the lower order of the people" (in Tester, 1989: 107). Bear-baiting, Windham observed, may be cruel, but at least it is preferable to Jacobinism (see also Thomas, 1983: 181ff). So

---

<sup>2</sup> E. P. Evans's curious volume The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals (orig. 1906) makes a related though slightly different point in analyzing the history of the legal prosecution of animals. Evans argues that animals were prosecuted and punished by the courts in order that chaos might be domesticated, and so that ecclesiastical authorities might extend their influence into the world of nature. The social control cherished by the state was furthered by the effort to promote legislative dominion in the animal kingdom.

while bear-baiting deserved banishment, the fox hunt, itself a part of the cultural heritage of the aristocracy and the royalty, would be preserved. Cultural historian Robert Malcolmson argues:

Just as the Game Laws discriminated in favor of the sport of gentlemen, and did so with the approval, or at least general acquiescence, of 'public opinion'--'Rural diversions certainly constitute a very pleasing and proper amusement for all ranks above the lowers', remarked one essayist--so the attacks on traditional recreation accommodated themselves to the circumstances of social and political power, concentrated their attention on the culture of the multitude, and fashioned their moral protest in a manner which was consistent with the requirements of social discipline. (1982: 41)

Political considerations infused with class interests played a prominent role in shaping the way that anti-cruelty legislation was drafted. But the fact that these legislative initiatives were recognized as both politically expedient and socially legitimate, signaled that there had been an important change in the way that people in the West were disposed to think about our relations to other creatures. Whereas Montaigne had argued in the sixteenth-

century that the ultimate tragedy of animal cruelty was the effect that this behavior had in lessening the prospects of people treating one another with kindness, by the eighteenth-century concerns that cruelty to animals was wrong in and of itself became a more credible position (Ritvo, 1987; Thomas, 1983). And by the nineteenth-century, as the appearance of legislation in the English parliament indicates, the view that animals are owed certain forms of consideration had become a sufficiently strong sentiment to attract the interest of legislators and other stakeholders.<sup>3</sup>

Still, there can be no doubt that the rise of anti-cruelty legislation was infused with political meaning, some of it based on traditional social stratification, and some of it arising from changing sensibilities among groups of newly urbanized intellectuals (Elias, 1978; Ritvo, 1987; Sperling, 1988). Even the way in which the modern animal rights movement encircles only some species within the fold of moral compassion parallels the social stratification of a

---

<sup>3</sup> I am not arguing that by the nineteenth-century advocates of animal welfare had nothing other than the well-being of the non-human beast in mind when debating legislation, for the primary motivation for curtailing the mistreatment of animals remained chiefly economic. But by the middle of the eighteenth-century, animal suffering, irrespective of its purported effects on human sensibilities, came to be regarded by a number of legislators and philosophers as an inherent evil (see for example Salt, 1892). As we will see in Chapter Three, a good deal of the reason for this change rests with the success of the Darwinian revolution.

political agenda.<sup>4</sup> The key point, I believe, is that once the push to legislate kindness to animals had begun, it became the working model by which the human-animal relation in the West was to be defined. The modern animal rights movement thus inherited a state-mandated model of legal responsibilities and obligations, and has attempted, within the limits of that model, to refashion a philosophical justification for the moral consideration of non-human beings. Hence the "liberation" of animals has assumed the quasi-political status of an emancipation movement.

---

<sup>4</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, most animal rights philosophers have accepted a ranking system of moral value, one that parallels the Great Chain of Being (Lovejoy, 1936). Thus we find that mammals are accorded a higher moral value than reptiles, for instance. As a general rule, it appears that the closer the animal in question is to our own species, then the greater the likelihood that the creature will be considered a member of the moral community (Warren [1990] refers to this practice as "moral extensionism"). No matter which set of criteria are used to explain species ranking--presence of consciousness, susceptibility to noxious stimuli, level of emotional responsiveness--the results invariably favor our mammalian kin. It seems that the more "open" the animal's genetic program, the more likely the animal is to be regarded as deserving ethically compassionate treatment (Midgley, 1978 and 1983). It is generally viewed as less cruel to squash a beetle under your foot than it is to mistreat a kitten, partly because the insect is a "lower" being, less open to its environment, while the feline is a "higher" form of life, and more open to its world. This line of reasoning parallels a line of thought regarding class stratification in Western cultures. It is not uncommon, for instance, to find courts ruling that the mistreatment of prostitutes is less offensive to society than the assault of women who are not involved in the sex-trade.

## **The Moral and the Ethical**

The push to legislate kindness provided a sustaining framework for animal activism, one that made sympathy for animal suffering a secondary consideration to the overriding legal and logical requirements both in drafting legislation and in articulating supporting philosophical arguments. Because the animal rights movement is concerned chiefly with the elaboration of an ethical system which evinces the consistency and internal logic of a rigorously devised discursive project, there has been a simultaneous devaluation by animal advocates of the emotional bonds and sympathetic considerations people feel in their relations with animals. That the animal rights movement is singularly devoted to the articulation of a reason-discursive ethics at the expense of any notion of emotional attachment is evidence of a form of ethical scientism in which individual moral impulses are treated with suspicion and occasional disdain.

The animal rights movement's focus on the role of rational system building points also to an important consideration mentioned briefly already: the distinction between ethics and morality. Drawing from the works of Emmanuel Levinas, Zygmunt Bauman, and John Caputo, I would propose that ethics is the product of a reason-based,

heteronomous code which parallels the structure of the Law. Morality, on the other hand, is an autonomous expression of individual responsibility which, by its very nature as autonomous, defies the codification and formalization that is implicit in various systems of ethics (business ethics, medical ethics, professional codes of ethics, etc.). Of course, there is heteronomy in the moral condition of being-for the Other, in finding our sense of self inaugurated by the presence of the Other as one whose appearance brings forth the urge to take responsibility for the Other's welfare. I do not mean that Levinas's conception of the moral condition is autonomous in the sense of being self-sufficient, but that the moral condition is an individual calling or election; that I am, as Levinas suggests, responsible for my own responsibility. Ethics is about duties, whereas morality is about individual responsibility. Bauman writes:

Only rules can be universal. One may legislate universal rule-dictated *duties*, but moral *responsibility* exists solely in interpellating the individual and being carried individually. Duties tend to make humans alike; responsibility is what makes them into individuals. Humanity is not captured in common denominators--it sinks and vanishes there. The

morality of the moral subject does not, therefore, have the character of a rule. One may say that the moral is what resists codification, formalization, socialization, universalization. The moral is what remains when the job of ethics...has been done. (1993: 54)

To act ethically, then, is to abdicate one's responsibility for the Other in order to express fidelity to the code, or law. Thus ethics, Bauman argues, has as one of its most important tasks the job of relieving us of our responsibilities as moral agents. In place of these autonomous responsibilities we are filled with heteronomous duties. Ethics, because it pretends to the illusion of universality, speaks with a single voice, and celebrates the effacement of individual obligation. Ethics' duty, as it were, is to make duty itself the goal of ethical action.

Morality, however, is fraught with ambivalence and individual culpability; it acknowledges openly the pretensions of universal conventions of correct behavior, and repositions obligation within the relation to the Other. Whereas ethics is a negotiated treaty in which reciprocal obligations form the essential bases for enforcing contractual relations, morality is a nonreversible encounter with the Other, one in which reciprocity is not the essence

of the relationship, but its annihilation. To do what I must for the Other because of a reciprocal agreement (or the expectation of reciprocity) is not to act morally, but to act from a different motive entirely. As Levinas argues, to be moral is to be for the Other unconditionally, to accept that *responsibility is infinite*. In the essay "Meaning and Sense", he writes:

To be an I means then not to be able to escape responsibility, as though the whole edifice of creation rested on my shoulders. But the responsibility that empties the I of its imperialism and its egoism, even the egoism of salvation, does not transform it into a moment of the universal order; it confirms the uniqueness of the I. The uniqueness of the I is the face that no one can answer for me. (1964: 55)

It is in this sense that Levinas says that moral being comes before ontology, that being-for-the-Other makes possible the being-with-the-Other of everyday life. Ethics can only follow from a reason-constitutive articulation of our social relations.<sup>5</sup> At that point, however, we have ceased to act

---

<sup>5</sup> This way of approaching the subject of social relations is a reversal of what are often thought to be the conditions by which sociality is constituted. As Bauman has said, "we are not moral thanks to society (we are only ethical or law-abiding thanks to it); we live in society, we are society, thanks to being moral" (1993: 61).

morally and have settled into the comforting oblivion of ethical conduct and duty fulfillment. To act according to ethical duty is to give up on obligation. As Caputo writes:

Obligation is what is important about ethics, what ethics contains without being able to contain. I am prepared to make my way without ethics, without the safety net it affords, even to take a stand against ethics. But it is one thing to raise one's voice against ethics, and quite another to speak against obligation. Am I prepared for life without obligation? Even so, what if I am not? What, then? (Caputo: 1993: 18)

There is, of course, no possibility of being without obligation, for as Levinas explains it, being-obliged is a defining condition of being. I am obliged, as it were, not because I have obligations, but because obligations have me. Obligations colonize us, they take us over in a moment that yokes us decisively to the Other. Hence morality is a relation of responsibility for the Other, and not to the abstractions of ethical reasoning. Again, as Caputo argues:

Obligation calls, and it calls for justice, but the caller in the call is not identifiable, decidable. I cannot make it out. I cannot say that the call is the Voice of God, or of Pure Practical Reason, or of a

Social Contract "we" have all signed, or a trace of the Form of the Good stirring in our souls, or the trace of the Most High. I do not deny that these very beautiful hypotheses of ethics would make obligation safe, but...I do not believe that obligation is safe. (1993: 15)

To draw this distinction between the moral and the ethical, then, is to suggest further that legislation, regulations, and various codes of ethical practice are intended mainly to deal with the problem of social discord. The distinction also suggests that ethics has a chiefly social character to it, for its scope, as noted earlier, is meant to be universal, while the province of morality is the individual, whose unique responsibility, Levinas insists, should never be overlooked. Moreover, ethical systems, whether utilitarian or neo-Kantian, have a contractual quality about them in which reciprocity plays a significant part--as it does in all contractual relations. The individuality of the moral calling (the "election" of the individual to a moral position, as Levinas puts it) disappears within the systematic organization of the rules and regulations for social conduct that ethics prescribes.

But to think about animal rights as a contractual affair almost immediately points to certain difficulties.

Animals clearly have no say in contractual arrangements, and no capacity to accept terms of reciprocity. Hence any kind of ethical planning in which animals figure prominently will be one in which they are placed only as objects of human interests. While they may benefit from such arrangements, it would appear unlikely that these benefits could be put down to a necessarily moral feeling on the part of every person who abides by the arrangement. In utilitarian schemes like Singer's, for instance, the motivations of the actors play little or no role in the determination of the greatest good; the calculation is largely an abstract affair. But Levinas's view that morality appears in the context of the face-to-face relation suggests that the social dimension of the ethical cannot explain the individual quality of the moral.<sup>6</sup>

Animal rights activists, as we have noted, adopt mainly utilitarian and neo-Kantian positions in explaining how our duties to animals ought to be arranged. But such arrangements carry the seeds of their own undoing in that they prescribe specific forms of ethical conduct on the strength of reasons that are drawn from a dimension foreign

---

<sup>6</sup> "Injustice can always find utilitarian justification," writes Erazim Kohák, "it must be challenged on moral grounds" (1984: 127). With Levinas, Kohák believes that injustice can readily be produced by "correct" ethical conduct.

to that of moral obligation. Efforts to legislate kindness to animals would be rejected by the Levinasian model of moral philosophy. Insofar as legislated kindness negates the need for critical reflection on the moral status of one's actions--and thus might be said to adiaphorize<sup>7</sup> one's conduct--it is also a precondition for the alleviation of responsibility. Because legislation promotes distance by prescribing relations via the threat of an external power, it renders the necessary intimacy of the face-to-face relation an unattainable ideal. Levinas's call to moral accountability is answered in ethics with a ledger of accounts receivable.

Nonetheless, ethical positions never suffer a lack of supporting arguments, and the animal rights movement systematically has built up a corpus of corresponding reasons why each of us should adopt certain practices to ensure that our everyday lives are untainted by the sin of animal cruelty.<sup>8</sup> Yet we must find some way of getting below

---

<sup>7</sup> Adiaphora comes from ecclesiastical thought, and describes phenomena which are regarded as morally neutral, or indifferent. To treat someone adiaphorically is to treat them as less than a whole being.

<sup>8</sup> As to the matter of finding supporting arguments for a given ethical claim, no better illustration comes to mind than that offered by Ambrose Bierce:

It is sayd there be a raunge of mountaynes in the Easte, on one syde of the which certayn conducts are immorall, yet on the other syde they are holden in good esteeme; whereby the mountayneer is much conveenenced,

the constructedness of ethical law in order to glimpse as fully as possible the nature of moral responsibility, and to see how firmly this responsibility can tie us to non-human beings. How is it possible, as philosopher John Caputo has asked, to be a moral individual and yet be "against ethics"?

### **Thinking Difference**

To answer this question we must look more closely at Emmanuel Levinas's position on moral philosophy. Levinas's work is a richly evocative body of ideas, often cryptically written, and occasionally marked by a kind of epigrammatic hurriedness. Some of his interpreters characterize his work as poetry (Caputo, 1993), while others have pointed out that hyperbole is the word that best summarizes his style

---

for it is given to him to goe downe eyther way and act as it shall suite his moode, withouten offence. (1978: 109)

On the matter of ethical social practices, the sorts of changes animal activists advocate often involve alterations in dietary and consumer activities (vegetarianism, 'green' shopping, cruelty-free cosmetics, environmentally sound investments, and so on). Much of our behavior as moral citizens is now tantamount to our behavior as conscientious consumers. Unsurprisingly, then, the animal rights movement's admonition that we change our ethical worldview frequently devolves to prescriptions for altered consumer habits. To give one example, the appendix to Peter Singer's 1975 Animal Liberation is entitled "Cooking for Liberated People," and in addition to advice on making the transition to vegetarianism contains a number of recipes. I suspect this to be one of the very few books on philosophy that concludes as a cookbook.

(Bauman, 1993, 1995; Llewelyn, 1995; Peperzak, 1993, 1995). In trying to write of experiences which lie beyond the domain of conventional philosophical thinking--ideas that, as Paul van Buren (1972) would say reside on the "edges of language"--Levinas is forced to adopt a style that is difficult to penetrate. Or, as Peperzak has said in regards to Levinas's language, "the difficulty of any attempt to think beyond Being lies in the philosophical unavoidability of a thematizing language" (1996: xi). Whether poetry or hyperbole, the unraveling of his main ideas requires a certain amount of sustained energy.

In order to provide an overview that minimizes the difficulties that Levinas's mode of address presents, I believe it is helpful to have a sense of where an examination of his views on morality will culminate before starting on the journey. Hence I want to indicate first the main conclusions regarding moral thought we come to in our examination of Levinas's work, and then retrace the route we must take to get there.

According to Levinas, morality does not depend on our ability either to understand or represent responsibility and obligation. This is a peculiar claim, especially given the tradition in Western philosophy of reducing questions of human nature to some form of discursive reason, of making

issues like morality both understandable and representable. Yet Levinas is clear that morality exceeds conventional notions of understanding and representation which he regards as modes of domination, assimilation, and control.

Hence relations in which one seeks to understand the other are framed by the assimilative dimensions of knowledge. Rather than seeking to understand the Other in this dominating, ontological mode, Levinas claims that morality consists in the one-to-one relation of the one for the Other, a relation in which the demand of the Other is imposed upon me as a call for infinite care and responsibility. It is, in a sense, the incomprehensibility of suffering that makes the moral relation irreducible to conventional language. Indeed, it is also the incomprehensibility of the Other that establishes the moral relation at all. Hence everything begins in the moral relation, including subjectivity and self-awareness. It is morality, Levinas insists, and not ontology, that is first philosophy.

If these are the main conclusions Levinas draws concerning morality, how are they supported? One way to begin is with a characterization of Levinas's work offered by Dwight Furrow (1995). Furrow places Levinas's moral philosophy in a class of perspectives he identifies as

antitheories. The antitheory position, Furrow says, sits in opposition to "normative ethical theories" in that it rejects the claim that "moral phenomena exhibit a unity that can be adequately represented by hierarchical arrangements of moral principles" (1995: 2).<sup>2</sup> Levinas's position is a repudiation of these traditional principles for organizing ethical duties; that is, his views stand outside of the conventional realm of ontology. In place of warranting or grounding principles, the antitheory position is

motivated by the perception that when moral agents think about moral questions, they do so not in terms of abstract principles with an aim to systematize some large chunk of moral experience, but in terms of concrete relationships with other people within the context of their understanding of those relationships, histories, and the institutions in which they are

---

<sup>2</sup> Furrow's phrase "normative ethical theories" parallels the expression *reason discursive ethics* discussed in the introduction to this essay. Furrow writes that "normative ethical theories typically offer the promise of applying principles supported by a theory to particular cases of moral decision-making, thereby helping to discover which of our moral beliefs or actions are justified and which are not" (2). This is essentially the point I made in the Introduction.

I want also to add that in rejecting the hierarchical ordering of principles conventionally systematized in normative theories, Levinas's moral philosophy is sometimes characterized as *an-archival*, that is, without *archè* (Greek: beginning, principle, ground).

embedded. Friendships, family relationships, religious and national heritage, economic status, and of course the slights, traumas, accomplishments, and joys of everyday life guide us in our complex judgments about morality. To the extent that we think about principles and rules, they are viewed as emerging from the aforementioned concrete relationships. (Furrow, 1995: xiii)

Levinas's antitheory inclinations can be discerned throughout his work. As my aim here is to illuminate his views on morality, however, I will only touch on other aspects of his perspective as these inform his conception of morality. Knowing in advance that Levinas values the one-to-one moral relation over the advocacy of social duties, it is easy to see that his antitheory framework would place him in opposition to the Western philosophical tradition.

This opposition is most apparent in the fact that Levinas views the major trend in Western philosophy as mainly assimilative. In other words, he argues that the beginning point of philosophical inquiry--the search for truth--is a kind of metaphysical violence in which the autonomous rational subject seeks to bring the otherness from outside (*exteriority*, Levinas says) under control in the form of the domination of the ego. As he puts it:

Even before the technical ascendancy over things which the knowledge of the industrial era made possible and before the technological development of modernity, knowledge, by itself, is the project of an incarnate practice of seizure, appropriation, and satisfaction.

(1984: 152)

The currents of Western philosophy, he suggests, have led persistently to a "hegemony of the Same" (1962: 12).

"Philosophy," he says bluntly, "wants to reabsorb every Other into the Same and to neutralize alterity" (1964: 48).

Knowing is thus a form of control brought about through assimilating otherness to the familiar. Control is achieved and maintained via a process of unification of other with self.

Hence Levinas's characterization of Western philosophy as the "rediscovery of the Same in the Other" (Levinas, 1993). Western philosophy begins with an orientation toward ontology, and the successful appropriation of Being by rationality. Levinas thus regards the Western philosophical tradition as consonant with the tyranny of the ego, or egology. In his essay "Philosophy and the Idea of the Infinite", he writes:

The surrender of exterior things to human freedom through their generality does not only mean, in all

innocence, their comprehension, but also their being taken in hand, their domestication, their possession. Only in possession does the I complete the identification of the diverse. To possess is, to be sure, to maintain the reality of this other one possessed, but to do so while suspending its independence. In a civilization which the philosophy of the Same reflects, freedom is realized as wealth. Reason, which reduces the other, is appropriation and power. (1993: 97-98)

In the sense that philosophy begins with the task of reducing the other to the Same, Levinas insists that ontology is the concern of power and control, and that moral compassion has, therefore, traditionally followed from the initial claims of ontology and reason. In his quest to reverse this ordering--in his quest to place morality before ontology--Levinas is thereby also seeking to undo more than the theoretical orientation of reason discursive ethics; he is seeking also to show that conventional ethical systems are themselves infected with this penchant for control and assimilation. Although ethics is about how to choose a proper course of action, it is equally about making that choice from within the prescriptive framework of rational

calculation. This approach to moral relations is a potentially dangerous privileging of reason over sentiment.

Peter Singer's preference utilitarianism, for instance, might be seen as a method for making rational justifications rather than as a way of accepting moral responsibility. The reason discursive structure of utilitarianism comes before morality. The diversity and the singularity of the animal Other is reduced, as Levinas suggests in the passage cited above, to a generality which apparently allows for human freedom.<sup>10</sup> But this freedom is secured tenuously in the act of destroying particularity in the interests of domination. Levinas challenges how such a project of assimilation can be regarded as moral.

Levinas's scheme therefore reverses the conventional sequence of the Western philosophical tradition: morality comes before ontology, before Being. He explains this notion most convincingly in his conception of the approach of the Other. In the encounter with the Other, he says, there is always something that escapes or evades the assimilative power of our concepts. That is, there is

---

<sup>10</sup> As Peperzak explains, "To grasp the Other as a particular case of some universal reality is to destroy that which distinguishes another human from all other beings in the world.... the Other disappears when reduced to an object of thematic reality" (1997: 51). The universal, which characterizes the domain of ethical duties, thus stands at some distance from the particularity of the moral relation.

something in the encounter with the Other that "breaks, pierces, destroys the horizon of my egocentric monism" (Peperzak, 1993: 19). This something (or some no-thing) is the very otherness of the other. This is not a matter of contrast as when the other is tall and I am short, for contrasts and comparisons merely reduce some feature of the Other to a condition whereby it can be explained by reference to the self.<sup>11</sup> This absolute alterity, Levinas insists, is a grounding principle of the self-other relation. The other is always not-me. No matter what I might try, the Other's alterity guarantees its independence and denies my every project at assimilation. Consequently, there is that about the Other, its very otherness, that is

---

<sup>11</sup> Thus Levinas writes:

All men are alike, but they are not the same. I did not at any moment want to deny the similarities between men. But the I qua I is absolutely unique, and when it is approached nonsociologically it has nothing in common with the other. It is not a question of a difference that is due to the absence or presence of a common trait; it is a question of an initial difference that is entirely self-referential. That is the I. (1962: 28)

Here Levinas makes explicit that the differences of which he speaks can not be understood in sociological or ontological terms. The I that is me is not the I that is you; that is the ground of our absolute alterity. Moreover, it is the fact of the irreducibility of this alterity, of the resistance of the Other to the hegemony of the Same, that stands out as a critical feature of his conception of the primary moral relation.

irreducible to conventional canons of rationality.<sup>12</sup> There is a dimension of experience revealed in the encounter with the Other that resists codification in the language of ontology. There is something to the other that is a mystery (Levinas, 1981).

If philosophy has conventionally begun its search for truth presupposing the primacy of ontology, Levinas's reversal, placing morality before ontology, suggests that the quest for truth begins from morality ("morality thus presides over the work of truth," he writes [1969: 304]). Hence our social relations with others are prefigured by the one-to-one moral relation. This conception differs sharply from the usual ordering of social thought in which the individual is seen as emerging from the nexus of societal

---

<sup>12</sup> One of the possible confusions in Levinas's work is his theorization of difference. John Caputo (1993) has attempted to deal with this problem by distinguishing between two varieties of difference, heteromorphic difference, which he suggests is rather Dionysian in character, and heteronomic difference, which is a difference of resistance. I would make the distinction along slightly different lines and suggest that there are two levels of difference in Levinas's work that we might distinguish.

(1) The Other as not-me, as that which cannot be known fully, understood totally, or contained by conventional categories of knowledge. This might be understood as first-order alterity in which the gulf between self and Other is recognized as unbridgeable. This is close to Caputo's sense of heteronomic difference. (2) The other as not-like-me, but different from me in some obvious somatic way. This suggests a kind of heteromorphic difference, a second-order alterity, as it were, that may be conceptualized as a continuum of difference.

connections that have preceded his/her coming into the world. In traditional social theory, the individual's autonomy is secured in a decisive act of separation from the social context. But to reason in this way, Levinas suggests, is to see the self emerging from the phenomena of roles, social masks, and publicly shared modes of understanding. And each of these relations is mediated by some overarching presuppositions concerning socially approved ways of conduct.

Levinas says that although such mediated relations have their obvious social value, we err if we imagine that these forms of relating one to the other capture the totality of all inter-relational experiences. There is that "something" mentioned above, that absolute alterity of the Other, that evades capture by reason, that is otherwise than being. This experience is founded in the unmediated relation of one for the Other.

An obvious question that arises at this point might be formulated as follows. If the irreducible moral responsibility of the face-to-face relation is the beginning point, how do we deal with the rupture of this dyad with the approach of another individual? What can a third person mean in the context of the pre-original moral relation beyond ontology? In other words, how does Levinas deal with

the problems of social justice and political action if we are to understand all moral commitment as grounded in the unmediated relation of one person for another? Levinas himself formulates the problem this way:

How does responsibility obligate if a third party troubles this exteriority of two where my subjection of the subject is subjection to the neighbor? The third is other than the neighbor but also another neighbor, and also a neighbor of the other, and not simply their fellow. What am I to do? What have they already done to one another? Who passes before the other in my responsibility? What, then, are the other and the third party with respect to one another? (1984a: 168).

Levinas's response is to suggest that when a third person comes into the scene we enter the domain of justice. "Henceforth it is necessary to know," he writes, "to become consciousness" (1984a: 168). The third party signals the extreme importance in human multiplicity of the political structure of society, subject to laws and thereby to institutions where the *for-the-other* of subjectivity--or of the ego--enters with the dignity of a citizen into the perfect reciprocity of political laws which are essentially egalitarian or held to become so. (1984a: 168)

Hence the third party initiates the move into ontology, consciousness, and ethical rule-making. "The ontological dimension of 'being-with' and general justice is constituted" by the third, writes Peperzak (1997: 114). It is in the presence of the third, hovering in the background and peering over the Other's shoulder, that justice and laws become paramount.

### **Absolute Obsession**

The moral relation is an unmediated relation between the absolute alterity of the other, and what Levinas refers to as the passivity of the self. This relation must remain unmediated as it is predicated on the refusal to force the other to submit to the domination of the ego; that is, the other's alterity is preserved in its resistance to being reduced to an instance of the Same. Furrow writes:

The concrete, naked presence of another human face, the recognition of otherness--without regard for distinguishing characteristics such as beauty, talent, social role, etc. that would bring the Other into the orbit of shared understanding--is the foundation of social reality. (144)

In this confrontation with absolute alterity--the absolute otherness of the Other--one's subjectivity is constituted.

This is a somewhat paradoxical way of conceptualizing subjectivity, however. Indeed, if one's subjectivity is constituted in the approach of the other, and if the other's otherness precludes the cognitive discourse of understanding, in what way can the other's presence be of any meaning to me?

One way to account for this experience, Levinas says, is by looking at the erotic relationship, for Eros, he argues, is structured according to this paradox. In the erotic relation, the lover desires unification with the beloved. The key point here, I believe, is that Eros does not merely rely on the notion of alterity; indeed, the erotic attachment is structurally one in which alterity must be preserved for the relationship to endure. In other words, the lover's desire cannot be requited insofar as the unity of self and Other can never occur, for this would amount to a reduction of the Other to the Same. Such a reduction would annihilate the basis of the love, namely, the independence and singularity of the beloved. Moreover, just as the responsibility for the care of the Other is infinite, so too is the desire for the beloved an infinite longing, a testimony, Levinas says. Levinas refers to this desire as an obsession in order to signify that although the

desire is never-ending, it is equally without possibility of satiation. "Desire is unquenchable," he writes,

not because it answers to an infinite hunger, but because it does not call for food. This Desire without satisfaction hence takes cognizance of the alterity of the Other. It situates itself in the dimension of height and of the ideal, which it opens up in being.

(1993: 114)

This conception of desire as obsession recalls Descartes's treatment of infinity in his third Meditation, as Levinas readily points out. But even if we accept the primacy of alterity as Levinas has described it, and even if we are convinced that alterity establishes the grounds of subjectivity, why would we be inclined to believe that alterity imposes moral obligations upon us?

If we accept that Levinas's view of our usual approach to the world is a domineering and assimilative one, then a resistance to this attitude, and a repudiation of the egology that underlies it, would reposition our relation to the world significantly. Hence he insists that only in rejecting the opportunism afforded by greed and reciprocity in order to remain open to the mystery of otherness, can we truly be open to every possibility exteriority offers.

Furrow summarizes these points this way:

To give of oneself, to give one's life or sustenance without expectation of reward, is the most profound expression of this resistance to a possessive, grasping ego. For Levinas, the meaning of the ethical relation is that it exists in this capacity to transcend any moment, to resist any completion, to oppose what is with a future of infinite renewal and a past of infinite obligation. To resist naked self-interest is the practical expression of the resistance to the discovery of the Same in the Other. To the extent that my experience of reality is conditioned by my actions, I only fully experience reality through the ethical relation. (1995: 155)

Such openness to the infinite desire that is one's obligation for the other is a disruption of the self-centeredness Levinas suggests lies at the heart of conventional thinking in ontology. It is equally disruptive of the self-serving motives which animate many ethical agendas. This is partly because as we construct our ethical programs we simultaneously invoke reasons for restricting or reducing the scope of our responsibility. Yet Levinas's position is that any such limitation is arbitrary. "My responsibility for the other is precisely this relation with an unthematizable infinity," Levinas says (1972: 103). To

be fully human, he suggests, depends precisely on our ability to accept the multifarious obligations that precede our presence in the world, and to resist the hegemony of egology. If, as Furrow says, "I only fully experience reality through the ethical relation," then humanity itself would seem to be predicated on the primacy of a moral relation that demands commitment without reciprocity.

### **Being-For the Other**

Levinas's philosophy of morality, then, begins with the claim that the moral stance, the primal scene of morality, is a pre-ontological condition. Morality, in other words, precedes being, though not in a temporal or sequential sense. As Levinas puts it, morality precedes ontology in the sense of being better, of being a condition which, we might say, is contaminated by being. Morality, as Levinas puts it, is before ontology; *for*, as it were, is before *with*:

The irreducible and ultimate experience of relationship appears to me in fact to be elsewhere; not in synthesis, but in the face to face of humans, in sociality, in its moral signification. But it must be understood that morality comes not as a secondary layer, above an abstract reflection on the totality and

its dangers; morality has an independent and preliminary range. First philosophy is an ethics.

(Levinas, 1985: 19)

Being--or ontology--is the realm of regulations and conventions, the world of ethical rules, duties, and codes of behavior. But the pre-ontological sphere of morality is a condition in which no rules are invoked, and no commands are given. The moral relation begins in this face-to-face encounter with the Other whose very vulnerability makes me responsible. To reach toward the Other in this non-discursive moment of connection, and to be committed to his/her welfare with no expectation of reciprocal kindness, is to experience the moral being by which all conceptions of self are measured. Morality is better than being, Levinas says, it is before ontology. Being moral is what transcends mere being.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> A passage from Bauman--at the risk of belaboring a difficult point--may make this notion of *before being* clearer:

The reasonable reader will be right to point out that 'before being' does not exist, and even if it did we would know nothing about it anyway--not in the way we 'know' about 'facts'. Yes, all this is evidently true (with ontology supplying all the evidence one would ever need). And yet there is no other place for morality but *before being*; that is, let us repeat, in that realm-not-realm which is *better than being*. And that realm has to be found by the moral self, as there are no beaten and signed tracks leading to it. Responsibility conjures up the Face I face, but it also

The duties prescribed by ethics are duties we obey precisely because they are commands that draw their force from sanctions that are rooted in the social realm. Duties, derived from the heteronomous world of ethical rule-giving, are intended to bring about (through coercion, mechanisms of surveillance, control, hegemony, guilt) the means for regulating our common social intercourse. But morality speaks directly to our individuality by refusing the universalizing pretensions of our ethical systems. Morality slips beneath the codifying, homogenizing, reductive demands of ethics. Whereas ethical precepts aim to establish a "level playing field" on which each of us acts our mainly interchangeable roles, the primal moral relation is a thoroughly individual calling, an interpellation by the Other which allows for no substitutions. As Levinas writes:

To be human means to live as if one were not a being among beings...It is I who support the Other and am responsible for him...My responsibility is untransferable, no one could replace me. In fact, it is a matter of saying the very identity of the human I

---

creates me as moral self. Taking responsibility as if I was already responsible is an act of creation of the moral space, which cannot be plotted elsewhere or otherwise. This responsibility which is taken 'as if it was already there' is the only foundation morality can have. A frail foundation, one must admit. But here you are: take it or leave it...(1993: 75)

starting from responsibility.... Responsibility is what is incumbent on me exclusively, and what, humanly, I cannot refuse. This charge is a supreme dignity of the unique. I am I in the sole measure that I am responsible, a non-interchangeable I, I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me. (Levinas, 1985: 100-101)

The aim of ethics is to rid the world of moral ambiguity by providing sets of rules which, if followed faithfully, enable us to put aside any doubts we might entertain about having acted with sufficient good will or consideration. So long as I have done "my best" according to the prevailing codes my society and my culture embrace as ethically responsible ways of being, I have been relieved of my responsibility to worry over my moral condition. Ethics offers us an illusion of freedom. The moral relation, on the other hand, is a condition in which one must necessarily feel as though one has not done enough, as though one can never do enough. Morality thus parallels the structure of desire in that even as it reaches out for gratification, it can never completely achieve its aim. The moral person is the person who laments that he can never do enough.

For Levinas, the moral relation occurs in the context of the face-to-face. But the face, as Levinas describes it,

cannot be reduced to a moment of mere perceptual awareness.

As he says:

You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When one observes the color of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that. (Levinas, 1985: 85-86)

The face, Levinas asserts, is an authority without force. That is, the face of the Other has the authority to command that I respond to the Other's needs, but no coercive power by which that command can be enforced. As Ricoeur has described it:

When the face of the other raises itself before me, above me, it is not an appearance that I can include within the sphere of my own representations. To be sure, the other appears, his face makes him appear, but the face is not a spectacle; it is a voice. This voice tells me, "Thou shall not kill." Each face is a Sinai that prohibits murder. And me? It is in me that the movement coming from the other completes its

trajectory: the other constitutes me as responsible, that is, as capable of responding. In this way, the word of the other comes to be placed at the origin of my acts. (Ricoeur, 1992: 336)

The face, Levinas argues, is destitute, comprised of "an essential poverty" (Levinas, 1985: 86). This poverty is the powerlessness of the Other-as-face, a presence that commands without force. "There is a commandment in the appearance of the face," writes Levinas, "as if a master spoke to me. However, at the same time, the face of the Other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all" (1985: 87). The face has authority, but this authority is not accompanied by coercive force (Wright et. al., 1988: 169). The moral self, then, is a response to the Other's vulnerability, and not merely a reply to the Other's power to compel ethical compliance. Bauman puts it this way:

Moral behavior is triggered off by the mere presence of the Other as a *face*: that is, an authority *without* force. The Other demands without *threatening* to punish, or promising reward. The other *cannot* do anything to me, neither punish nor reward; it is precisely that weakness of the Other that lays bare my strength, my ability to act, as responsibility. Moral

action is what follows that responsibility.... The face of the other ([as] Levinas insists) is a limit imposed on the effort to exist. It offers, therefore, the ultimate freedom: freedom against the source of all heteronomy, against all dependence: against nature's persistence in being. (1993: 124)

Here again the distinction between the moral condition of autonomous responsibility and the ethical condition of heteronomous duty fulfillment is brought into focus. To keep the Other on the outside of the moral relation is to control not only one's putative obligations, but also one's definition of the other as morally deserving. To think and act ethically, in other words, is to adhere to the delineations by which traditional conventions mandate societal divisions in order to posit an illusory form of universality. In whatever ways our actions might harm the spatially distant other, strict fidelity to our socially sanctioned ethical schemes relieves us of individual culpability.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> I am thinking here of how people in Western societies lead materially rich lives at the expense of those living in so-called developing nations, and how the actions we perform daily have a direct bearing on the misery and oppression of others. For instance, the Anti-Slavery Society of Australia has estimated that more than 100 million Asian children--some as young as four years old--are working in sweatshops under conditions of virtual slavery, producing everyday commodities such as car parts, jewelry, clothing, toys,

Ethics, in addition to pursuing the illusion of universalizability, applauds the merits of reciprocity. But here again, morality denies the allure of the reciprocal. I am my brother's keeper, Levinas says, not because I anticipate some future reward for my actions, but because I anticipate no rewards at all. Indeed, it is not in spite of the fact that I can anticipate no reciprocity that I will act morally, but precisely because I acknowledge that there will be no reciprocation. Morality is founded on an orientation toward the Other that resists the forms of codification that would see the Other's demands turned into formal imperatives of conduct with some specific moral force. I act morally because the Other is one to whom I am

---

food, and chemical products (Associated Press, 1995). Yet individual responsibility for the plight of these abused children does not seem to be appropriately applied to those of us living here in Canada, whose connection with such forms of exploitation is difficult to personalize let alone conceptualize. Our role in this process of exploitation, as Marx pointed out, is concealed in commodity fetishism. The effacement of those whose lives are damaged by our everyday customs tends to make moral responsibility a foreign invader in our ethical vocabulary. Those with no faces can expect no response when our lives are tied inextricably to the social networks and business obligations of our immediate lifeworld. Indeed, our work ethic prescribes modes of conduct which has as one of its direct consequences, the perpetuation of the misery and exploitation of the spatially-absent other. The impulse of individual responsibility gives way to the allure of ethical universality. In like fashion, the effacement of the animal Other is a precondition of its being placed in a world of relative moral indifference.

responsible; I am *for* the Other, not merely *with* the Other. My being-for, is the beginning point of my moral self-hood--indeed, of my self at all. I am responsible for my responsibility.

Decoupling responsibility from reciprocity, argues Arne Vetlesen, is the decisive notion that separates Levinas's theory of morality from all others (in Bauman, 1993: 220). Levinas explains the moral stance as one in which the Other cannot make specific demands, but whose appearance as Face compels me to be responsible for the Other's condition. Yet without any prospect of reciprocal treatment, what is it that compels me to act with moral compassion, what directive is it that I follow in assuming this responsibility? The answer is that I am responsible because I am a moral being, and I act in a morally responsible fashion *precisely because there are no rules or directives providing me with guidance*. Moral responsibility is a highly individual affair, one in which I remain unaffected by what everyone else may be doing, or what the conventions or ethical traditions may tell me are my duties. When I face the Other in this pre-ontological condition and feel the Other's vulnerability and need, I accept my responsibility--feel compelled to this responsibility--without thought of reciprocation. Reciprocation, Levinas points out, is an ontological

phenomenon, one that requires rational investigation or calculation on my part. Morality, however, as a pre-ontological relation, has no place in the world of ethical rule-making. Moral conscience exists beyond the rational codes of behavior that are constituted and invoked to ensure social compliance; morality is the antithesis of such rational deliberation. As Bauman has said:

Reason cannot help the moral self without depriving the self of what makes the self moral: that un-founded, non-rational, unarguable, no-excuses-given and non-calculable urge to stretch towards the other, to caress, to be for, to live for, happen what may.

Reason is about making correct decisions, while moral responsibility precedes all thinking about decisions as it does not, and cannot care about any logic which would allow the approval of an action as correct.

Thus, morality can be 'rationalized' only at the cost of self-denial and self-attrition. (1993: 247-48)

Or, as Vetlesen writes in his analysis of the face-to-face encounter:

The look meeting look, the face facing a face, amounts to a relation that is shot through with a moment of commitment. But this commitment is unlike all others; it is not a product of the subject's intentionality; it

is not wanted, it simply imposes itself as a property pertaining to the very structure of this dyad of proximity. (Vetlesen, 1993: 202)

"Obligation is a feeling," Caputo says, "the feeling of being bound.... As soon as I come to be I am already in its grasp" (1993: 7). In the immediacy of the face-to-face the Other becomes an authority without force with the power to command from me a response that equals responsibility. How this happens, Caputo says, is one of the mysteries of moral being. But it is a feeling, he claims, that is activated by the Other in whatever form the Other might assume.

### **The Morally Relevant Animal Other**

The form the Other assumes is clearly a central consideration for this project, for in spite of Levinas's ambivalence on the subject, I want to suggest that the animal Other is a morally relevant being. Although Levinas has been hesitant on the subject of the moral status of animals (Wright et. al., 1988; Llewelyn, 1991), I believe that the central tenets of his moral program are in no way weakened by the inclusion of animals, and may well be made stronger. If it is "precisely that weakness of the Other that lays bare my responsibility" (Bauman), and if the face of the Other rises up before me in a moment beyond all

rational, ontological conditions, then the view that animals constitute morally relevant Others would appear to be prefigured in Levinas's work on moral being.

Levinas suggests that the moral subjectivity of human nature permits us to transcend the "pure being" of animality (Wright, et. al., 1988). Yet animals never conceal their being from us, for they cannot disguise their identity with masks. Hence the encounter with the animal Other is a staging of the moral condition, for the vulnerability of the animal is the sole source of its capacity to command. In the face-to-face encounter with the animal there is no discourse, no logical tabulation of reciprocal rights and duties. To confront the animal Other is to be thrown back upon sympathy, connection and spontaneity. Indeed, even in Levinas's writing, some hint that animals are morally relevant beings can be discerned:

The neighbor concerns me before all assumptions, all commitment consented to or refused. I am bound to him, him who is, however, the first one on the scene, not signaled, unparalleled; I am bound to him before any liaison contracted. He orders me before being recognized. Here there is a relation of kinship outside of biology, "against all logic." It is not because the neighbor would be recognized as belonging

to the same genus as me that he concerns me. He is precisely *other*. (Levinas, 1981: 87)

The neighbor is like me but different. In my capacity to see the Other as neighbor we are similar, but this similarity is merged with the Other's alterity. It is not a matter of biology, Levinas says, not a question of seeing in the Other precisely those features by which I am reflected back to myself. My concern is for the Other as other, whatever form (or genus) in which the Other assumes its life. Hence one can argue that animals are morally relevant beings, that animals are, as John Llewelyn has suggested, the very neighbors of which Levinas speaks (1991). It is, after all, that experience of felt-responsibility in which our moral being is conceived, and not a question of the nature of the Other toward whom that responsibility is owed. In other words, Levinas's focus on the *relation* rather than on its communicants suggests a view of the moral condition in which the alterity of the Other, whether heteronomic or heteromorphic, is incidental to the compulsion of being-obliged.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, if we seek to justify the suffering of the animal Other on the basis of its species alterity, Levinas's own words--that the justification of the Other's

---

<sup>15</sup> On the notion of communication as relation see Bateson, 1972.

pain is the beginning of all immorality--come echoing back to us.

"The biological human brotherhood," writes Levinas, "conceived with the sober coldness of Cain--is not a sufficient reason for me to be responsible for a separated being" (1975: 142). It is not the ontological fact of biological kinship, in other words, that commands my responsibility, for the face brings me into relation with the other regardless of the racial, ethnic, or religious origins that mark the Other's past. Rather, the face itself, confronting me in its naked vulnerability reaches out in a moment of proximity to command me. Proximity, the relation of my being hostage to the other, brings the Other's face sharply into focus. But this is a face without features, a face that speaks not a word of a biological heritage, racial affiliation, or ethnic history. It is a face that commands me to responsibility precisely because it is a face.

It is possible to suggest that just as the biological human brotherhood is not at issue in the unveiling of the moral relation of the one for the other, so too we might at least question the significance of the species barrier in this regard. John Llewelyn, reflecting on Levinas's thinking at this point, asks

why must responsibility be limited to responding to a being that has the gift of speech? Why can we not allow an ethical responsibility to dumb animals?

(1991: 240)

Perhaps the answer to Llewelyn's question begins with Levinas's assertion mentioned earlier that in the West, an overwhelming fascination with theory and thematization has served to contain, suppress, and assimilate the Other. It is the function of theory to dissolve the enigmatic in the context of overpowering and subsuming alterity. But throughout his writings, Levinas invariably configures the Other as the human Other. As fellow creatures, he says, "we belong to the same essence" (1962: 27).

But are animals not also enigmas to us, and especially in ways that exceed the mysteriousness of the human other? Or are they merely objects? Has Levinas associated his work so closely with that of Descartes (adapting Descartes's notions of infinity) that he has revisited the Cartesian doctrine of animal automatism?

It is true that animals have no human language, and in this respect would appear to be without a face in the manner Levinas describes. But it is also possible that in confining his notion of face to the subject of logos--human beings--Levinas has arbitrarily restricted his conception of

Other-ness in a way that cannot actually withstand scrutiny. Indeed, this is precisely the point I would argue. It appears that in his wish both to separate the moral relation from the thematizing project of rationality, and simultaneously to preserve a connective affinity stretched across the pre-original chasm of alterity, Levinas must locate some common ground on which to anchor this bridge. The gap of alterity is thus maintained even as in being bridged in relationship it is, temporarily, spanned. John Llewelyn remarks that this connective affinity, this compulsion to be responsible, is actualized for Levinas in the context of the very rationality he banishes from the moral relation. As Llewelyn puts it:

In the metaphysical ethics of Levinas I can have direct responsibilities only toward beings that can speak, and this means beings that have a rationality that is presupposed by the universalizing reason that is fundamental in the metaphysics of ethics of Kant.

(1991: 57)

I am morally responsible for human Others, then, because in them I discover the very rationality that is absolved from view in the prediscursive moral relation. Hence Llewelyn's suggestion that in his tendency to privilege speech as a marker of moral relevancy, Levinas tends to follow Kant's

views that ethical duties are owed directly only to rational agents. Indeed, any casual reading of Levinas's words on moral responsibility will show that the Other is an exnominated concept, that the "human" aspect is named out, as beyond the need of nomination.

How, then, to name animals in? Levinas argues that we are obliged before we can contemplate or plan, that obligations, in a sense, have always arrived before us. But there is nothing implicit in the pre-originary nature of obligations that would suggest that our responsibilities are confined to human-to-human relations. The *feeling* of my responsibility for the Other strikes me as my feeling, my responsibility, and my election. And when this obligation for the Other is triggered by the approach of an Other who is not-human, it is unclear why the quality of my responsibility should be challenged by the Other's absence of speech. To distinguish among my obligations on the basis of the Other's biological (or species) status is to thematize the Other, the relation, and the nature of my responsibility. To qualify my responsibilities in this way is to prejudge the Other's moral warrant in what may amount to a universalizing gesture.

Am I to trust to my "obsession" to be for the animal other, or am I to interrogate it closely to determine the

Other's status? To thematize or not to thematize; to accept the responsibility or dissect it; these are the apparent choices consequent upon dissolving the moral relation into a search for the animal's voice. But knowing in advance that this voice will remain inaudible, there is really nothing to say except, perhaps, that my feeling obligated has not been attenuated by this logic.

One way of proceeding here might be to accept that in the approach of the animal Other a moral relation can ensue in the prohibition "Thou shalt not kill." This follows simply from the animal's vulnerable condition and the poverty of its communication. I need to ask whether the animal has actually failed to speak, or whether I have merely failed to listen. And for his own part, it is apparent that at times Levinas has listened.

In the essay "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," Levinas recounts an episode from his imprisonment in a slave labor camp. At one point during his internment a dog wandered into Camp 1492 which the prisoner's named 'Bobby'. As Levinas explains,

he would appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt we were men.

(1990: 153)

As the Nazis had silenced their prisoners, rendering them "beings without language" (153), it fell to Bobby to affirm their humanity with his enthusiastic greetings. Levinas's ruminations about Bobby are tinged with a certain melancholy; in addition, a distressing uncertainty creeps into his words when he addresses the moral relevancy of animals following this reminiscence. Throughout "The Name of a Dog", Levinas hesitates as to which direction he should go. At times he seems inclined to acknowledge Bobby as a fellow sufferer; at other points he chastises himself for his mawkish sentiment, vowing to put aside the anthropomorphic language into which he lapses. But his admonishments only serve to highlight the difficulty he is experiencing in trying to write of Bobby's persistent affection while remaining aloof from the sentimentality that would undermine his allegorical tale about Nazi brutality. A being without language, apparently Bobby could never have presented Levinas with a face.

The difficulties with Bobby's moral status were not resolved when the Nazi guards eventually chased him away, and in later years Levinas almost never returned to the question of animal moral being. But in an interview conducted in the late nineteen-eighties, Levinas was asked

directly if animals have moral standing. His reply was curious:

One cannot entirely refuse the face of an animal. It is via the face that one understands, for example, a dog. Yet the priority here is not found in the animal, but in the human face. We understand the animal, the face of an animal, in accordance with *Dasein*. The phenomenon of the face is not in its purest form in the dog. In the dog, the force of nature is pure vitality. It is more this which characterizes the dog. But it also has a face. (Wright, 1988: 169).

And then later, in the same interview, he struggles to clarify his comments about the animal face:

I don't know if a snake has a face. I can't answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed. But there is perhaps something in our attraction to an animal.... In the dog, what we like is perhaps his child-like character. (1988: 172)

It is not just that Levinas returns each time to the question of the dog that is of interest here, though this is intriguing. Perhaps Bobby is still with him. But Levinas's hesitancy is more noteworthy, especially in the way in which his answer is phrased: "One cannot entirely refuse the face of an animal." The corollary to this is that at times one

can refuse the face of an animal, but Levinas does not specify what would be required to distinguish between times of refusal and times of recognition. It may be that he meant that partial refusals are acceptable, but this seems doubtful. In any event, it is instructive that when he turns his mind to the matter in greater detail, Levinas discovers that the idea of face becomes increasingly problematic. Can a snake have a face? Apparently this is even less certain than the case of the dog, suggesting that even more uncertainty would arise if Levinas were asked about oysters. It is also uncertain what Levinas might mean about face "in its purest form." With this phrase he intimates that some form of continuum, a Chain of Face, is operative in his analysis. And yet his analysis of face has traditionally stressed its irreducible character, an emphasis that would seem at odds with the notion of a face in an impure, or lesser, form.

Finally, Levinas was asked whether, if animals are devoid of faces, we are to show them moral regard:

It is clear that, without considering animals as human beings, the ethical extends to all living beings. We do not want to make an animal suffer needlessly, and so on. But the prototype for this is human ethics.

(1988: 172)

It would seem that for Levinas animals are a Third party; that is, animals are owed justice of a sort, but this is not to be found in the one-to-one moral relation of being for the human Other. Yet there is really nothing in his analysis to suggest why this transition from the moral relation to the social duty should be made so abruptly. Even Levinas's own experiences seem to confuse his judgement on this point. Though he writes as though animals are invariably instances of the Third, I would suggest that this designation is driven more by theoretical expediency than by the implicit structure of his own philosophy. I would hazard that some denial of his own sentimental affinity for Bobby is at work here.

### **Sentiment and Reason**

Indeed, moral sensibility arises from an innate, essentially human-animal being; ethical duties, on the other hand, derive from socially constructed, heteronomous systems of social conduct which aim to negate the endemic ambivalence of morality by laying down rules which, if followed, render the prospect of an immoral act impossible. As Bauman puts it, "the modern project postulated a world free from moral ambivalence; and since ambivalence is the natural feature of the moral condition, by the same token it

postulated the severance of human choices from their moral dimension. This is what the substitution of ethical law for autonomous moral choice amounted to in practice" (1995: 4). But the modern (or postmodern) world clearly is filled with ambivalence and ambiguity, especially, in the arena of moral behavior. The idea of introducing animals into this already confusing labyrinth of obligations and competing (and often contradictory) responsibilities seems hardly likely to make the situation clearer.

Nonetheless, I believe it is in Levinas's concept of responsibility for-the-Other that the firmest ground for establishing any kind of moral regard for other creatures is to be discovered, and that the efforts of animal rights activists to compel us to moral compassion on the strengths of logic and deduction cannot succeed. It is by thinking of animals as morally relevant Others for whom we are each and individually responsible that we can connect with other creatures even as we (re)establish a connection with our own animal being.

Moreover, to think about animals as morally relevant beings entails a further recognition of the ways in which we can most effectively discuss our feelings of obligation without becoming enmeshed in complex debates about rights, duties, foundational truths, and the other entailments of

conventional ethical theorizing. And the key element in this, I believe, is that obligations are *felt*, rather than known. One's connection to the Other is a sympathetic, sentimental bond in which feelings assume a privileged, anterior status.<sup>16</sup> As Caputo puts it, "obligation is a communication from feeling to feeling." He goes on to argue that

obligation is not a rational utterance (*logos*) received on the other end as wholly intelligible and hence as worthy of being obeyed.... Obligation is not like a man talking to himself and offering himself counsel, which he judges to be the best advice he can get; it is instead a shock to the I, to my freedom and autonomy. Obligation is not an exchange transacted in the *mundus intelligibilis* but a bell sounding in the *mundus sensibilis*. (Caputo: 1993: 27)

To feel obligated (as opposed to knowing about one's obligations) is an experiential condition in which an

---

<sup>16</sup> Lyotard writes:

The quasi-fact of obligation...is like a sign marked upon the addressed entity in the form of a feeling. The obligated one sentimentally infers that there is some authority which obligates him or her by addressing itself to him or her. (1988: 121)

This idea is not unique to Lyotard, although the view that moral being is a condition of felt-being poses several difficulties. I try to deal with these problems as the essay develops.

affective connection with the Other supersedes the distanciation that is fostered by knowledge. As Furrow says, "moral obligation involves a feeling of being bound to another person through a recognition of his or her capacity to suffer--a recognition that cannot be reduced to an instance of understanding, a system of principles or norms, or a coherent narrative" (1995: xix). To feel obliged also underscores the difficulties of trying to provide a discursive account of obligatory relations for, as Gergen suggests (1989), we have no adequate vocabulary with which our feelings can be adequately described (hence Caputo's self-proclaimed intention in Against Ethics to write a "poetics of obligation", and Levinas's efforts to describe his philosophy in language as free from ontological references as possible). The specific form of the emotional attachment of being-for is less important than its being structured as emotional engagement: in Levinas's words, "the inter-human lies in a non-indifference of one to another, in a responsibility of one for another" (1988: 165). This state of non-indifference, as Bauman elaborates, is the decisive aspect of moral being:

The being-for, I propose, means an *emotional* engagement with the Other *before* it is committed (and before it can be, conceivably, committed) to a specific course of

action regarding the Other. Emotions transform the 'mere being-with' into a being-for through three crucial achievements. First, emotion marks the exit from the state of indifference lived among thing-like others. Second, emotion pulls the Other from the world of finitude and stereotyped certainty, and casts her/him into the universe of under-determination, questioning and openness. Third, emotion extricates the Other from the world convention, routine and normatively engendered monotony, and transmits her/him into a world in which no universal rules apply, while those which do apply are overtly and blatantly non-universal, specific, born and shaped in the self-containment of the face-to-face protected from the outside influence by the wall of sentiment. (1995: 62)

In the realm of emotions the Other cannot assume the character of an object or commodity, for the non-indifference of emotional attachment counters the objectification that is encouraged by regulated systems of measurement and evaluation. Ethics, in its headlong rush to efface individual responsibility by universalizing a formal code of appropriate conduct, bases its organizational hierarchy on completely rational principles. Rationality, then, becomes the antithesis of authentic moral

responsibility. Hence rationality, Bauman suggests, is equivalent to moral indifference (1995: 264ff.). To be for-the-Other is to be committed already in a relationship framed by emotion.

But to say that the moral relation is framed by emotion, feeling, or sympathy is not simply to say that it surpasses all possibility of being understood. We know that when we feel obliged, this feeling is more than a vague impulse with no directive potential. Feeling obligated is a particular kind of feeling, one that involves an orientation for the Other that is experienced as being imbued with meaning. The sphere of obligation, Caputo argues, is "its own form of life, its own genre, its own justification.... We know our obligations because we meet up with them, face to face" (1993: 39). Thus we "know" our obligations from within a structure of affectivity; feelings, that is, provide the ground on which we can place our articulated obligations.

Andrew Tallon has discussed questions of feeling and emotion in Levinas's work by identifying what he calls the "affective intentionality" in Levinas's moral philosophy (Tallon, 1995). According to Tallon, it is important to recognize that in Levinas's writings on morality, there is a largely unexpressed view that the face-to-face relation is a

mainly emotional, affective relation. But this relation has about it a kind of intentional character--the being-for the Other, as Levinas describes it. Hence there is an intentionality in Levinas's work that is not strictly phenomenological in nature, but which orients us to the Other in a kind of sympathetic union of moral engagement. As Tallon claims:

To speak of intentionality is to speak of meaning. To intend is to mean. To intend affectively is to mean through feeling. To say the face means responsibility is shorthand for an affective intending or meaning that in the face-to-face relation one feels responsible for the other. It is not something first understood in concepts or reached as a conclusion in judgments, nor is it freely chosen or decided on after deliberation. Rather, one is affected by meaning, one is commanded by proximity, held hostage by an experience, not after representation but before it, in presence, presentation, vulnerability, embodiment, in affectivity as its own kind of intentionality, its own access to meaning. (Tallon, 1995: 108)

The thesis of Tallon's work takes the following form:  
"Together affective intentionality and nonintentional affectivity explain Levinas's philosophy of the face as

ethical responsibility in that the synchronic affective intentionality of the face-to-face relation draws its authority from a diachronic nonintentional affectivity" (1995: 108-109). In other words, the affective intentionality of the face is a synchronic event: the face of the Other touches and affects us in the here-and-now. But there is a "diachronic nonintentional affectivity" at work as well, an affectivity which, in Tallon's view, operates much as a symbol, or Jungian archetype. This second affectivity is diachronic in that it reaches back into "a preconscious and preintentional past, before knowledge, volition, or freedom" (108).<sup>17</sup> Nonintentional affectivity is not simply a physiological urge like hunger or thirst, but "a projection onto the other of one's own interior archetype" (1995: 108).<sup>18</sup> Both affectivities

---

<sup>17</sup> Tallon's employment of the synchronic/diachronic relation suggests that a structuralist methodology has been fused with his proclaimed Jungian interpretation of Levinas's philosophy. A diachronic nonintentional affectivity mirrors the deep structure of a Chomskyian linguistics (or the *parole* of semiotics) just as the synchronic affective intentionality is a reflection of the surface structure (semiotics' *langue*). This organization of Levinas's thought is developed later in this essay in my discussion of Darwin's theory of the evolution of the moral sense.

<sup>18</sup> This phrase is ambiguous. I believe that what Tallon means is that nonintentional affectivity is a feeling which is motivated by an inherited archetype, and that it does not arise from somatic urges. In this respect he seems to be suggesting that the "interior archetype" is a human construct which has no analogue among animals.

operate together, with (diachronic) nonintentional affectivity being mediated by (synchronic) intentional affectivity--the face. As Tallon suggests:

There has to be some link between the before-the-prehistoric origin of our affectability, on the one hand, and each present event of one's consciousness of being affected in the face-to-face relation, on the other. If we had no such consciousness, no intentionality to which Levinas could appeal, then his work and his message would remain inaccessible to consciousness and thus outside assent of his readers.

(Tallon, 1995: 109)

The authority of the face thus has a dual structure, according to Tallon. Affective intentionality entails first an affectability (an ability to be affected), and a responsibility (an ability to respond). The dual structure of affective intentionality, Tallon says, is just this: affectability plus responsibility. The important question that remains, then, is why am I so affected by the face?

Affectability itself--the ground of responsibility--is based on something prior to itself, namely, a nonintentional connaturality, affinity, kinship, solidarity with the other: something in me resonates with the other and I am spontaneously affected and so

commanded to respond--obsessed, Levinas says, and therefore free. (1995: 109-110).

For Tallon, then, the ability to be affected by the face is rooted in the primordial history of human being from which is drawn up "something" to resonate with the other. This some-"thing", he says, is really a relation, a form of connaturality, affinity, or kinship.<sup>19</sup> The face is thus a symbol (Tallon's word, though Levinas would probably choose the term "trace") in which is contained the past (diachronic nonintentional affectivity), the present (synchronic intentional affectivity), and the future (responsibility for the Other). Hence Tallon goes on to say that "Levinas holds that affectivity is the basis of responsibility; that is, one's ability to be affected in vulnerable embodiment grounds one's ability to respond" (1995: 118).

Responsibility, as an embodied or felt condition, is a primitive condition.

---

<sup>19</sup> The apparent irreducibility of connaturality leads Tallon, as the passage here shows, to speak of the impulse to be for-the-Other as a response to that "thing" within which resonates with the Other. Terminology of this sort may be more ontological than Levinas would countenance, but it is clearly one aspect of the difficulty in coming to grips with his perspective. Thus in Adriaan Peperzak's attempt to convey the idea that the moral relation is one in which resonance frames the connection, we read: "I have been chosen, neither by myself not by another's will or decision but by some thing or some no-thing that is present through the Other who shows me his/her face" (1993: 28).

I do not want to follow too closely Tallon's Jungian interpretation. What I do want to take up is his claim that responsibility for the Other is, in his reading of Levinas, an affective connection, for this point is particularly helpful in establishing the claim that animals constitute morally relevant Others. Just as Tallon invokes the pre-discursive past as the ground of responsibility, so too I want to propose that the connaturality or kinship by which the Other's face resonates within us derives from our shared history with animals as participants in organic being. Responsibility, Levinas insists, is found within us, though it feels to have come from the other as face. What is discovered in responsibility, I suggest, is a form of affinity or resonance that need not be exclusively human in character, for responsibilities may be felt for myriad others (alterity, after all, being no barrier to obligation in Levinas's thinking). Feeling obliged for the animal Other is an expression of resonance or kinship across the alterity of the species divide.

To put this yet a different way, I am suggesting that morality is an *in-corporated* phenomenon; that morality is an aspect of our animal being and, as such, is experienced as a form of feeling, sympathy, or affective intentionality. I would go somewhat further and suggest that the animal rights

movement, in spite of its stated ambition of conferring moral status upon animals, has explicitly denied the incorporated condition of moral being and, instead, has ex-corporated morality and thus severed the most fundamental connection uniting human and animal being in the context of a moral relation. As we have seen, animal rights philosophers Peter Singer and Tom Regan have written that in order to create a new ethics for our treatment of animals, we must first rid ourselves of all forms of sentimental attachment to animals, and accept that only reason will enable us to find convincing and logical arguments with which to change prevailing public attitudes. Such arguments, however, sweep away the very foundations upon which our moral responsibilities to animals can be situated, for it is precisely in the structure of our affectivities and sentiments that animals can assume the status of moral creatures. And, as I have already suggested, it is within our own animal being--that is, within our lived experience as embodied beings--that our own moral sense is to be discovered. It is in the animal being of human nature, the impulse to be for-the-Other before the rational calculation of those responses most likely to receive social approbation, that the moral self first appears. If our relations with animals are not framed by an active

affectivity, then those relations can evince none of the qualities of moral responsibility. Animal activists who calculate our obligations to animals have made those obligations meaningless in the task of performing such calculations.

Recall for a moment Bauman's point concerning the pre-ontological aspect of Levinas's moral philosophy, and the related claim that being-for-the-Other is always an emotional engagement before it is possible to commit to a specific course of action. As Bauman points out, the important part played by emotions in transforming being-with (the ethical condition of convention) to being-for (the moral condition of commitment) can be discerned in three events. First, he argues that emotions make it difficult to live among others as though they possess only a thing-like status; that is, emotions make indifference (logically?) impossible. Second, emotions remove the Other from "the world of finitude and stereotyped certainty," forcing us to face the Other in a condition of under-determined openness. And third, emotion obviates convention and routine, removing the other from the rule-directed world of impersonal relations. With emotion, in other words, the other must be faced as a unique being for whom we assume responsibility

precisely because there are no longer universal rules to guide our conduct.

This account of the role that emotion serves in the framing of moral responsibility suggests several difficulties with the animal rights movement's conceptualization of moral thought. Specifically, it appears that the animal rights movement is incapable of regarding animals as morally relevant others. In the first instance, it is clear from Singer's and Regan's arguments, that animals are thing-like beings pinioned in the web of rational deliberations upon which their respective theories are based. By actively denying that emotions and sentiment should play a part in our concern for animals' moral status, animal activists establish the conditions that make it impossible for other beings to ever become subjects of moral consideration. Instead, animals are relegated to the role of objects about which ethics can only abstractly theorize.

Second, because animals are the objects of such analyses, they are stereotypically depicted, and are never viewed with an eye to discovering their individual natures as living beings. In Singer's work in particular, the focus on the aggregate analysis of the putative consequences specific behaviors hold for the social group automatically renders the task of ethical theorizing an abstract and

emotionless affair. And finally, both Singer and Regan maintain that it is imperative that we formulate ethical systems which will admit of no exceptions; that is, their main emphasis is on the task of constructing universally binding sets of rules and regulations. Here again, the function of distancing oneself from emotional engagement is crucial if abstract universalizing of this sort can be carried out. Calculating the consequences of one's actions according to an ethical system is an effective technique for alleviating oneself of responsibility through emotional distancing. Guilt and remorse are feelings, not improperly carried out calculations. Calculation, one might suggest, takes the place of care.

But arithmetic calculations are, of course, a prominent feature of contemporary animal rights philosophy, just as the disavowal of sentiment figures conspicuously in the movement's philosophical perspective. Levinas's moral philosophy, then, suggests an alternative to the views that have been advanced by animal rightists. This view states that it is imperative that moral consideration must follow from an open acceptance of our sentimental affections, our feeling that Others are deserving of our attentions. This is not to reduce moral responsibility to emotivism, but to address more openly than ethics ordinarily allows the fact

that responsibilities must be felt rather than merely known if they are to have any directive force in our lives.

And yet, what sorts of emotions are we to feel? The question is important, but it betrays one of the fundamental difficulties inherent in Levinas's thinking. After all, it would be difficult if not impossible to prescribe feelings, to admonish others to embrace some emotional dispositions in the context of certain circumstances, and to avoid others. It would also fly directly in the face of the Other's alterity and autonomy. Feelings, as Caputo might say, simply happen in much the way that obligations come upon us unannounced. Thus while it may be valuable to think about the primary moral condition as one that is given first in some form of emotional engagement with the other, it is equally important to ask whether or not this emotional engagement can be given a more particular form.

But as Bauman points out, although the "emotional relationship to the Other" is the decisive event in Levinas's philosophy of morality, the exact configuration of the emotions in question remains remarkably elusive. As he puts it:

I...propose that the kind of emotion which colours the relationship is secondary, regarding the very emotionality of encounter which is primary--and

decisive. The being-for is, to start with, neutral in relation to good and evil; it does not find the opposition of good and evil ready-made, less still drawn in a clear-cut, unmistakable and once-for-all way; it is rather that *the opposition itself, the possibility of acts being good or evil, emerges and takes shape in the history of being-for.* (1995: 62; emphasis in original)

The "emotionality of the encounter is primary." As Bauman sees it, our emotional commitment for the Other is itself structured in such a way that it supersedes the experience of specific emotions; that is, Bauman, following Levinas on this point, appears to suggest that being committed for the Other is *better* than the specific ontological fact of any particular emotion.

Yet although the moral stance is primarily a relation for the Other which is "colored" by an emotional attunement, we can not easily identify the type of emotion such engagement requires. Indeed, Bauman goes on to say that the emotions we are speaking about here need not be necessarily those of sympathy or fellow-feeling; still less of empathy, commiseration or compassion. The sole requisite is that the Other is cast as a target for emotion. (1995: 62-63)

Such comments are indicative of a kind of postmodern conception of the emotions, suggesting a direct relation to Schachter's work on emotional labeling. Schachter claims that emotions, from a physiological viewpoint, can be described best as a condition of generalized physiological arousal (Schachter, 1964). Fear, ecstasy, anger--each is a physiological condition for which different cultures provide their own labels. Emotions must be understood, then, as having a dual structure in which biology and culture are in constant interaction.

Following this line of thought, James Averill has said that emotions are really *cultural performances* which we offer to others as appropriate representations of our internal states (Averill, 1982). Emotions, in other words, are tied up in culture and in relationship. To speak of the necessity for specific emotions is to speak from a cultural context, and to privilege that culture's emotional repertoire.<sup>25</sup> When Bauman says that the emotional encounter

---

<sup>25</sup> Much of the material concerning the way emotional performances vary from culture to culture comes from anthropology. To cite one example, Catherine Lutz's work on the Ifaluk of Micronesia discusses the emotion of *fago*, an emotional disposition of central importance in Ifaluk culture. *Fago* is very much like love, and is generally expressed only toward those with whom one has a close and intimate relationship. Yet unlike Western love, *fago* is an emotional state tinged with sadness; in the West, in fact, we might be inclined to describe it as compassion. In a

of the moral relation is primary, and that the specific emotion is secondary, he appears to be arguing along the lines suggested here. Emotional engagement in the moral relation is not the articulation of a specific, culturally defined set of feeling attributes, but a kind of attunement or orientation--what Tallon has called an affective intentionality. Being-for the Other is a condition of pre-discursive preparedness in which no emotional labels can yet be given.

In Levinas's terms, we might explain this difference between the primary emotional encounter and the secondary specification of emotional labels as lying between *the saying* and *the said*, the difference between saying as the mode of the face-to-face relation, and the said, as language (Levinas, 1981). Simon Critchley says that "the Saying is the sheer radicality of human speaking, of the event of being in relation with an Other; it is the non-thematizable ethical residue of language that escapes comprehension, interrupts philosophy, and is the very enactment of the ethical movement from the Same to the Other" (Critchley,

---

state of *fago* one feels grief when the other is absent or dead, and yet these feelings are part of an active, ongoing relationship. Lutz suggests there is simply no single emotion in the West that is a precise equivalent for *fago* (Lutz, 1988).

1992: 7). To be engaged emotionally for the other, one might propose, then, is a form of saying which, though non-thematizable, nonetheless establishes a moral relation between self and other. As Martin Buber has written:

The realm of the interhuman goes far beyond that of sympathy.... The only thing that matters is that for each of the two men the other happens as the particular other, that each becomes aware of the other and is thus related to him in such a way that he does not regard and use him as his object, but as his partner in a living event.... The essential thing is not that the one makes the other his object, but the fact that he is not fully able to do so and the reason for his failure...[I]t is my privilege as man that by the hidden activity of my being I can establish an impassable barrier to objectification. (1965: 73-74)

In much the way that Buber regards the decisive act of moral action as a refusal to allow the other to become an object to oneself, so too Levinas suggests that at that moment that the other appears to one as face, one is under the force of moral obligation. This position differs from the view of animal rights activists, whose main line of argument, as we have noted, is largely contractual in nature, and thus liable to reduce the other to the condition

of object. In both Singer and Regan's accounting of our ethical duties to animals, there are points of specific demarcation (Singer: sentience; Regan: subject-of-a-life) beyond which moral obligation simply dissolves--if it ever materialized at all. But in Levinas's perspective, moral obligation is an attunement to the needs of the other beyond the lines of demarcation, beyond the boundaries of what I have referred to as ethical cartography. To suggest that Levinas's perspective may offer a more productive way of thinking about our moral relation to animals is only to say that if animals do warrant moral concern, then they do so because they are seen as creatures whose face can place us under obligation. In other words, whatever responsibilities we might owe animals must proceed not simply from a series of utilitarian calculations, but from motivations unconnected to such systems of abstract enumeration.

Animal rights supporters have continued to accept the subject/object dichotomy despite their protestations to the contrary. Insofar as their plan of action remains indebted to the view that animals are mere objects of theory, animal activists tend to undermine their own efforts. Moreover, Singer and Regan's claim that animals must be regarded with virtual dispassion, makes it impossible to see how one might

ever acknowledge that animals may have a claim to a moral relation.

This process of conceptualizing animals as objects is a position long associated with Rene Descartes, and the doctrine of animal automatism. Whereas animal activists have been quick to denounce the consequences of Descartes's analysis of other creatures as machines, there is a hint of Cartesian thinking embedded in the animal rights perspective. In particular, as I have been suggesting, animal advocates continue to argue that in order to bring animals within the orbit of ethical thinking, they must be theorized in an emotionless and rational theory. The separation between subject and object thus seems firmly attached to animal rights investigations.

In the following chapter, therefore, I want to consider Descartes's contribution to the question of animal rights. In order to have a more complete idea of the social, political, and philosophical forces against which the modern animal rights movement has deployed its energies, Descartes's legacy and the question of animal moral status must be examined.

### CHAPTER THREE: MORAL OBLIGATION AND THE ANIMAL MACHINE

If anyone should make a mechanical clock, would he not make all the wheels move as harmoniously as possible?

- Bishop Nicole d'Orseme

They administered beatings to dogs with perfect indifference, and made fun of those who pitied the creatures as if they felt pain. They said the animals were clocks; that the cries they emitted when struck were only the noise of a little spring that had been touched, but that the whole body was without feeling. They nailed poor animals up on boards by their four paws to vivisect them and see the circulation of the blood which was a great subject of conversation.

- Nicholas Fontaine

Even the strictest Cartesian would never think of petting his chronometer as he pets his poodle, or would expect the former to respond to his caresses as the latter does.

- E. P. Evans

#### Associated Press

STOCKHOLM--A Swedish court has ordered a burglar to pay the equivalent of \$500 in damages for shocking a parrot when he broke into a house, the national news agency TT reported yesterday.

Since the burglary last year, the parrot has been afraid to stay at home alone and his master is forced to drive him to relatives when he leaves his house in Arboga in southern Sweden, the agency said.

In its ruling, the court said the thief, who was not identified in line with Swedish media regulations, should pay the transportation costs as damages. March 16, 1994

#### Descartes's Garden

This chapter assesses the influence of Descartes's doctrine of animal automatism on the philosophy of the animal rights movement. I argue that the thesis of animal automatism entails an implicit ethical structure, that a form of reason discursive ethics is implied in Descartes's metaphysics. I also suggest that although animal rights activists denounce Descartes's views regarding animals, current animal rights positions reflect significant aspects of Cartesian thinking, especially in the tendency to devalue

sympathetic modes of understanding in favor of a reason constitutive theory of ethics. The doctrine of animal automatism, in concert with the mechanical philosophy, provides a perspective on animal being which has both transformed the foundations of the natural sciences and de-legitimated (and de-valued) moral sensibility.

### **Descartes's Tree**

Rene Descartes's work (1596-1650) marked a decisive shift in Western thought from ancient scholasticism to modern philosophy. Though some writers have questioned the originality of his thinking, none would deny the impact of Descartes's ideas on the development and direction of Western philosophy and science. John Cottingham, one of Descartes's biographers, insists that no philosopher in history has been more widely studied, and that Descartes's critical attitude in regards to the status of received knowledge and academic traditions "seems to symbolize the very essence of [modern] philosophical inquiry" (Cottingham, 1992: 1). Descartes is one of the few philosophers whose ideas have attained currency in the discourses of popular culture.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Popular caricatures of Descartes's *cogito* include book titles (*I Laugh, therefore I am*) and social advocacy posters protesting unbridled consumerism (*I shop, therefore I am*).

Yet Descartes's fame stands back-to-back with his notoriety. Much of what he wrote is now rejected as ill-conceived or radically misguided, so that in certain respects, one might label the present philosophical outlook as profoundly anti-Cartesian. Of course, even to designate our age this way is to acknowledge his influence. Despite the vigor with which Descartes's views are renounced, his shadow falls across much of the cultural landscape, penetrating even into areas where his work merely brushed the margins. His attempt to determine the foundations of certain knowledge has bequeathed controversies that will not go away.

Descartes periodized the history of philosophy by breaking with the authority of the ancients, and asserting the place of modern, scientific investigation in the task of philosophical analysis (Rodis-Lewis, 1992). He was also one of the first philosophers to espouse the prospect of an intellectual system which could bring the various branches

---

Contemporary comedians have entered the arena (*I am dyslexic, therefore I ma*), as have many scholars. Psychologist and social critic Kenneth Gergen, commenting on the emergence of what he calls a "relational reality," has suggested the phrase "*communicamus, ergo sum*," while sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, noting the tendency of information overflow to undermine legitimate reasons for public acclaim, offers for consideration the postmodern slogan "I am noticed, therefore I exist" (Gergen, 1991: 242; Bauman, 1995: 157).

of science and philosophy into a comprehensive organization. In a famous simile proposed in his Principles (1644), Descartes described knowledge as like a tree, "of which metaphysics is the root, physics the trunk, and all the other sciences the branches that grow out of this trunk" (1978c: 156). In this picture several important features of the Cartesian system are discerned.

First, the simile of the tree shows Descartes's belief in the hierarchical relationships between the various kinds of knowledge, an important consideration given his subsequent commitment to the thesis of the reducibility of natural phenomena to mathematical-mechanical explanations. The view that all of the sciences are linked together, as he explained in one of his early notebooks, was central to his further observation regarding the interrelations between physical and metaphysical investigations. This proposal is especially important in light of the argument presented here concerning the interpenetration of Cartesian epistemology and discursive ethics.

Second, the picture of the tree placed the more practical aspects of philosophy in the role of fruits which could be plucked from the tree of knowledge to satisfy material wants. This image showed Descartes's interest in abolishing the tediously speculative philosophy of the past,

and his ambition to make philosophical inquiry answerable to the pragmatic demands of society. In Part VI of the Discourse, Descartes wrote:

I perceived it to be possible to arrive at knowledge highly useful in life and in room of the speculative philosophy usually taught in the schools, to discover a practical [philosophy], by means of which, knowing the force and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us, as distinctly as we know the various crafts of our artisans, we might also apply them in the same way to all the uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature. And this is a result to be desired, not only in order to the invention of an infinity of arts, by which we might be enabled to enjoy without any trouble the fruits of the earth, and all its comforts, but also and especially for the preservation of health, which is without doubt, of all the blessings of this life, the first and fundamental one. (1978a: 49)

Descartes's interest in the control of nature through learning and technology was placed here alongside his persistent interest in the transformation of medicine from an uncertain art into a rigorous science. His confidence in

the prospect of advancing knowledge to the point that nature might be controlled by scientific intervention was related directly to his belief that, given adequate knowledge of physiology and anatomy, it would be possible to extend the average human life span beyond one hundred years. The practical results that the tree of knowledge would bear were the means by which death (nature) could be overcome (Leder, 1990).

Death assumed a privileged significance in Cartesian metaphysics, and played a key role in the eventual enthronement of science: death became the guarantor of knowledge. As Foucault (1975) has observed, the primacy of the cadaver as the preeminent tool of medical education was a profoundly Cartesian way of approaching medical practice. The patient's reports concerning his/her condition were secondary to the knowledge that could be gleaned from examining the lesions found on the corpse during the autopsy.<sup>2</sup> Knowledge and death, as Jonas (1966) and Merchant

---

<sup>2</sup> "Only when a corpse is the body plainly intelligible: then it returns from its puzzling and unorthodox behavior of aliveness to the unambiguous, 'familiar' state of a body within the world of bodies, whose general laws provide the canon of all comprehensibility" (Jonas, 1966: 12). Note that the success of the mechanical philosophy is such that intelligibility is defined already in terms of the ontology of death. Life 'de-familiarizes' intelligibility in part because it draws us into the discourse of morality where reason has a difficult time retaining its footing.

(1980) have both argued, were forever linked with the Enlightenment project.

Finally, the simile of the tree spoke directly of Descartes's most central presupposition: foundationalism. Knowledge must be established on a bedrock of indubitability, and intellectual progress must issue from the strict application of deductive reasoning. All epistemic projects must therefore be reductionistic; knowledge moves only from first principles forward. In this regard Descartes gives reasons for the common judgment that he played a central part in the intellectual revolution of the seventeenth century, and the birth of the modern age of science. Not only did his foundationalism provide a necessary part of the bases upon which modern science would be built, but it suggested also the inevitability of epistemological progress. Descartes's self-confidence, while indicating something of his aloof and arrogant nature, was also a reflection of an age that was characterized by intellectual optimism and a belief in the inevitability of scientific progress.

To clear away the uncertainties that impeded his progress, Descartes developed an introspective program of rational inquiry conventionally referred to as *methodic doubt*. This approach, which Descartes presented as the

inevitable product of reasoned deduction, differed from skepticism in that its objective was to secure truth, not merely to challenge it. But in making a method of doubt, Descartes's search for indubitable truth was shaped by a specific and circumscribed conception of knowledge; his method, in other words, was implicated in the definitions of the truth that he sought. In failing to recognize the recursive influence of the method of doubt on the structure of knowledge that the method procured, Descartes moved steadily toward a philosophical project in which separation, ironically, would figure as a connecting theme.

Descartes began by setting aside all knowledge that was merely probable; hence those aspects of organic life for which physiological or even metaphysical explanations were wanting became uncertain. His conclusion that animals are *automata*--machine-like entities without souls, consciousness, or moral standing--was a parsimonious conclusion, but one that was virtually compelled by his rejection of the merely probable.

The sufficiency of mechanical explanations in the arena of organic being was doubtful at best, as many of Descartes's contemporaries were at pains to point out (Jolley, 1992). Yet the philosophical system constructed from methodic doubt attacked the foundations upon which

critics of mechanism based their arguments. Thus, for example, Descartes rejected the common view that animals are capable of mentation by challenging the Aristotelian doctrine, first proposed in De Anima, of a tripartite division of souls. Aristotelian theories of ensoulment played an important explanatory role in an animistic universe; in particular, they helped to explain certain classes of animal behavior by appealing to a *nutritive soul* that was said to be common in humans and animals. The Cartesian worldview, however, with its ontology of death, rejected the ensoulment of beasts, regarding it as an unnecessary addition to a practical, mechanistic account of animal behavior.<sup>3</sup>

Descartes's philosophy led to a systematic disenchantment of the natural world (Berman, 1981). Descartes's concern with the attainment of indubitable

---

<sup>3</sup> Denying that animals have souls enabled Descartes to answer two long-standing theological questions as well. First, the mechanical philosophy provided a negative response to an age-old query as to whether or not animals would enjoy an afterlife. Denying that animals were ensouled beings ended this debate. But a second problem was contingent upon this response, for theologians had long pondered the meaning of animal pain. If animals did not have souls, then their earthly suffering could not be redeemed through spiritual salvation. Yet mechanism could settle this problem as well, for Descartes made soul synonymous with consciousness. If animals were without souls, then they were without consciousness; and without consciousness, they were without feeling. (see Rachels, 1990.)

knowledge was unaffected by considerations of the social character of knowledge, its embeddedness in the historical conditions of its development, or the cultural implications that might follow from its application. Descartes's break with the past, therefore, was not only a break with the orthodoxy of Greek philosophy; it was a provocative challenge to the moral center of European culture. As one of Descartes's Jansenist critics, Le Maistre de Sacy put it:

God created the world for two reasons...one, to provide an idea of his greatness; the other to depict invisible things in the visible. M. Descartes has destroyed the one as well as the other. 'The sun is a lovely piece of work,' one says to him. 'Not at all', he replies, 'it is a mass of metal filings.'... He insists...on providing a reason for everything. (cited in Jolley: 402)

The mechanical philosophy de-valued aspects of organic being that had been fundamental to the everyday understanding of nature and animals--an understanding that was conditioned by sympathy as well as by intellectual curiosity (Berman, 1989). The simple fact that an automaton was without moral consequence was a powerful illustration of the interpenetration of ethics and epistemology in the Cartesian method. It was equally evidence of the fallacy of

Descartes's search for "pure" knowledge. As Jonas perceptively points out, the doctrine of animal automatism enjoyed some success in accounting for somatic "mechanisms", but at the expense of making life itself unintelligible (1966: 58ff).

In rejecting the commonsense view that animals are capable of emotional and even cognitive behavior, Descartes suggested that scientific inquiry should transcend experiential knowledge. Everyday language, in other words, must be translated into the mathematical discourse of dispassionate reasoning, however severely that language might emerge stripped of commonsense judgments. But in the end it was efficiency that mattered. The material world, according to Descartes, is nothing other than a series of variations in the shape, size, and motion of an homogenous matter known as *res extensa* (extended things). The material world, that is, is without purpose. And into the realm of *res extensa* Descartes assigned all physical events and biological processes. Animal being was thus divested of agency, and the organizational aspects of animal behavior were explained as the operation of mechanical forces acting independently of any will. Indeed, organic behavior as such was not the expression of will at all, but the purely inevitable consequence of natural laws.

It is largely the apparent indifference to animal suffering which Descartes's doctrine of automatism appears to legitimate that distresses animal rights philosophers. But the counter-intuitive features of his philosophical rejection of subjective experience in favor of the objectively determinate has also received harsh criticism. Animal activist Peter Singer sees animal automatism as "the absolute nadir" (and "most bizarre") outcome of the coupling of Christian doctrine with the principles of rational inquiry (1975: 207). The counterfactuality of Descartes's mechanical philosophy, Singer holds, is proof of an alienated sensibility, a form of concentrated rationalism, that has been severed from the concrete world of everyday experience. The doctrine's denial that we can infer the existence of cognitive states in animals by reflecting on our own experiences was mainly consistent with the materialist bias of the mechanical philosophy. Yet as Singer sees it, the doctrine of animal automatism carries the limitations imposed by rational inquiry to the point of absurdity.

In this judgment Singer is not alone. Philosopher Bernard Rollin has written that contemporary scientific developments have paralleled those that took place in the seventeenth century where "philosophy was invoked to

overcome common sense in favor of a reductionistic biology" (1990: 130). Animal automatism and biological reductionism, Rollin suggests, are related socio-political beliefs which, despite their putative grounding in scientific research, have pervaded all areas of society by validating the search for "underlying mechanisms" in the cultural as well as the natural domain. Ours is an age, Rollin argues, in which the phenomenal world of secondary qualities has ceded its value as experience to the abstract domain of primary qualities where measurement is itself the measure of truth. The practice of reducing biological phenomena to mechanical substrates, Rollin claims, represents a concerted attack on subjectivity and the autonomy of moral judgment. Consequently, animal automatism, which underlies the development in this century of biological determinism, is the foundational tenet opposing the moral consideration of animals, for it is that doctrine which divests the lived experience of all beings of anything more than epiphenomenal interest. Animal automatism is an important aspect of the development of a moral ontology which denies the role of passion in the constitution of the moral subject.

Descartes's tree, then, was an ironic simile, for though it drew its internal logic from organic metaphors, it served to undermine that metaphor in praxis, and to overturn

the ontology of life in favor of an ontology of death (Jonas, 1966). To trace the path by which Descartes came to the doctrine of animal automatism, I will follow the growth of Descartes's intellectual project from the roots upward.

### **Descartes's Doubt**

Descartes's philosophy, rooted in rationalism and introspection, was self-consciously devised as the antithesis of conventional modes of learning and instruction, and in recounting his intellectual journey he was especially fond of emphasizing the heroic dimensions of his solitary quest.<sup>4</sup> Russell has noted that in his writings Descartes emerges as an explorer, rather than as a teacher (1945: 557ff). His explorations took him to the interior landscape of his thoughts, and away from the frontiers of the outside world. He was inclined to journey toward the future, and leave the past largely uncharted. He was, as Harold Innis has remarked, the philosopher who first "succeeded in liberating philosophy from history" (1951: 63).

---

<sup>4</sup> See especially Part VI of the Discourses and the Preface to the Principles of Philosophy. It is perhaps only a coincidence that the Meditations presents Descartes's philosophical development as occurring over a six day period, but the similarities this narrative bears to the Genesis creation narrative deserve mention.

Descartes discussed this liberation in his books and correspondence. Recounting his education in the Discourse, he wrote that although he had studied Greek, Latin, history, literature, science, mathematics, and philosophy, most of his education had been a waste of time, for very little of what he had learned showed any promise of leading him to certain truth. Only mathematics, he wrote, had any semblance of certainty, while philosophy, he contended, was an abysmal entanglement of contradiction and ill-founded opinion. "Of philosophy I will say nothing," he wrote, "except that when I saw that it had been cultivated for many ages by the most distinguished men, and that yet there is not a single matter within its sphere which is not still in dispute...I reckoned as well-nigh false all that was only probable" (1978a: 8). Though Descartes was to begin his intellectual journey lamenting epistemic doubt, it would be ontological doubt that would provide him with the first principle in his quest for truth.

Descartes's narrative toward certainty is carried out in both the Discourse and the Meditations. Each is remarkably engaging, especially in light of the austerity of the subject. Determined to liberate his thinking from the false opinions of his youth, Descartes first renounces his reliance on the books and received wisdom of society,

focusing instead on what he can know with certainty when left to the contemplation of only his thoughts. He begins by considering the possibility that truth is conferred through the senses, but this notion he quickly rejects. Like all of us, he admits, he trusted his body and his senses when he was a child, but as he matured, "a wide experience by degrees sapped the faith I had reposed in my senses," for it became unclear how he could be certain that his sensual apprehension of the world was direct and accurate (1978b: 131).

Among his proofs of the unreliability of the senses, Descartes cited what is today known as phantom limb phenomenon. That the body could be so deceived on the question of sensation suggested to Descartes that his own experiences of pain could not be taken as indubitable. Optical illusions and technological innovations like the telescope gave further evidence that our senses should never be taken as entirely trustworthy. Even the possibility that what is experienced as a waking state might actually turn out to be a product of his dreams indicated to Descartes that uncertainty confounded his every attempt to adduce the world through his senses (1978b: 131ff).

The uncertainty of sense perception compelled Descartes to the conclusion that the existence of physical objects was

also uncertain, for our belief in material things is based on sense perception, and consequently liable to error. Even beliefs derived from the natural sciences suffer the same fate, for they too are largely based on the presumed reliability of sensual apprehension.

Finally, Descartes considered the status of mathematical beliefs. As he had taken mathematics to be the paradigm of certain knowledge it would seem that here at last he had found a refuge from uncertainty. But Descartes now questions his confidence that two and three makes five, for some "malignant demon" with the power to misdirect his thoughts might have deceived him into believing in mathematical certitude. However unlikely and fantastical this scenario, he concludes that he cannot state with absolute certainty that the truths of mathematics are indubitable. Thus certainty of the trustworthiness of his senses, of the existence of material objects, and of the certitude of mathematics are systematically abolished. And in order to clear away all vestiges of the merely probable, Descartes says that he will suppose that his beliefs, perceptions, and all external things are "nothing better than the illusions of dreams" (1978b: 84). By the application of methodic doubt, Descartes willingly descends into the depths of uncertainty.

But the abyss of doubt provides its own lifeline, for Descartes transforms the method of doubting everything which is merely probable into a statement of his ontological condition as a thinking thing. "Let [the demon] deceive me as he may," Descartes writes, "he can never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I shall be conscious that I am something" (1978b: 86). Thinking thereby becomes the first principle, and, as Descartes remarks, awareness of his own consciousness is a guarantee as well of his own existence: *cogito, ergo sum*. The condition of doubting (an ontological issue), as opposed to the facticity of doubt (an epistemological problem), leads him to his first, indubitable truth: his own existence.

How firm was this argument? As Descartes's friend and correspondent Pierre Gassendi was to point out in the Fifth Objection to the Meditations, the argument is ingenious but flawed, for Descartes presupposes that thinking can exist only as the action (or state) of some substance; that existence, in other words, follows from the act of thinking. Clearly Descartes has offered no proof of this relation. As Gassendi argued in letters to Descartes, he may have shown that thinking is taking place, but he has not proven that thinking entails necessarily the existence of substance. The presumption that thinking constitutes substance,

Gassendi indicated, is an unwarranted presupposition borrowed from the scholastics.

So firmly was Descartes committed to the dualism entailed in his reasoning that he remained unpersuaded by Gassendi's argument. The certainty of his thoughts therefore became Descartes's first principle, his own existence taken as beyond doubt. And with this first principle in hand, he began the return journey to the world of material objects to show how the certainty of his own existence can provide a foundation for the knowledge of other things. To do this, Descartes examined closely the ontological status of his first principle; that is, he deduced from the indubitability of the *cogito* those conditions which for him constitute its veracity. He writes:

I am certain that I am a thinking thing; but do I not therefore likewise know what is required to render me certain of a truth? In this first knowledge, doubtless, there is nothing that gives me assurance of its truth except the clear and distinct perception of what I affirm, which would not indeed be sufficient to give me the assurance that what I say is true, if it could ever happen that anything I thus clearly and distinctly perceived should prove false; and

accordingly it seems to me that I may now take as a general rule, that all that is very clearly and distinctly apprehended (conceived) is true. (1978b: 95-96)

Descartes here established that what is clearly and distinctly perceived is certain, for the certainty of the *cogito* had been established precisely on such grounds. More significant, perhaps, is the corollary he ascertained: that whatever is clearly and distinctly perceived cannot be doubted. Therefore, tracing a line of reasoning that many of his critics began to suspect was more circular than linear, Descartes avowed that as he possesses in him the clear and distinct idea of God, and as clarity and distinctness were now his measures of indubitability, God must exist. He supported this claim for God's existence with additional arguments, including the proposition that the contents of one's thoughts (the idea of God specifically) cannot be greater than their cause (Descartes adopted the position that an effect can contain nothing greater than its cause from Augustine; later, Levinas would use this argument to support his views on Infinity). Because Descartes is an imperfect being, the concept of a perfect being could not have originated with him; God must therefore have implanted in him the idea of a deity.

The significance that the idea of God held for Descartes's system cannot be overstated, for once he had established God's existence, it became a fairly simple task to establish the reality of the world. As God is perfect in knowledge and kindness, the overwhelming tendency he has given us to regard the objects of the material world as truly existing must be sound, for otherwise God himself would become Descartes's malignant demon. The clarity and distinctness with which we apprehend God is proof of his existence. And God's existence, taken together with the attributes ascribed to him in Christian theology, provides the basis for our conviction that the world truly exists. As mentioned, the tautology this argument evinces--the so-called Cartesian Circle--remained unresolved in Descartes's day, though he attempted to explain it away in letters to his critics (see for example, Loeb, 1992). The essential point in the present context is that Descartes was able to establish a systematic ordering of knowledge from a metaphysical first principle which, he argued, was available to each of us given the universality of natural reason.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> "The conviction...is to be held...that the power of judging aright and of distinguishing truth from error, which is properly what is called good sense or reason, is by nature equal in all men" (1978a: 3). The confidence Descartes displays here in the power of all people to follow his arguments by exercising their natural reason is at odds with the opinions he expresses in subsequent passages

True, we can be confused and mistaken, and our knowledge of the world is indeed imperfect. Though reason may be universal, it is no antidote for the ills of misperceiving the truth. But errors occur not because we are unable to understand, Descartes says, but because we are prone to failures of our will (1978b: 116). As Descartes explains:

For as often as I so restrain my will within the limits of my knowledge, that it forms no judgment except regarding objects which are clearly and distinctly represented to it by the understanding, I can never be deceived; because every clear and distinct conception is doubtless something, and as such cannot owe its origin to nothing, but must of necessity have God for its author--God, I say, who, as supremely perfect, cannot, without a contradiction, be the cause of any error; and consequently it is necessary to conclude that every such conception or judgment is true.

(1978b: 119)

Only on such occasions as we allow our will to run ahead of our reason are we liable to fall into error. But our wills must be capable of outrunning our knowledge because they are

---

concerning the inability of some individuals to follow his arguments at various points (see Part II of the Discourse in particular).

free; errors are a natural consequence of our freedom. Put differently, *our freedom to err makes possible our salvation by rescuing us from the involuntarism of the automaton.* Thus Descartes's metaphysics, epistemology and ethics, were united in a kind of mutually supportive structure. Ethical conduct was dependent on a proper understanding of the truth, and truth was secured on the ontological primacy of clarity and distinctness. Hence the reason constitutive nature of Descartes's ethical system was made manifest in the interpenetration of epistemology and ontology. That is, because we can learn the truth and yet act in a fashion contrary to what our knowledge informs us about right and wrong, we are free creatures. Our freedom further makes us capable of being judged. Our wills make errors possible, but this is the price paid for freedom and the possibility of salvation.<sup>6</sup>

Descartes established the existence of the world on the first principle of his own existence, an intellectual movement which, as Tijmes suggests, is really a turning away from truth to truthfulness, and from reality to reliability (Tijmes, 1995: 242). The system of reasoning, in other

---

<sup>6</sup> Hence the view that "free will expresses itself solely in wrong choices" that so dominates the modern era (Bauman, 1993: 6).

words, begins to overtake the reality of lived experience in importance. Yet truthfulness and reliability necessitate a kind of *ego specularity*; they force a retreat from the world and into the selfhood of the observer. Closed off from reality, and oriented only to the reliability of clear and distinct ideas, the dialogical character of social relations is submerged beneath the rationality of the *cogito's* soliloquy. All knowledge begins in the solitary enclave of the mind.

This metaphysical commitment to clear and distinct ideas is also the key to Descartes's science, including the doctrine of animal automatism. To see this relation, it is necessary to move further up the tree, and explore the features of the mechanical philosophy upon which the thesis of animal automatism is based.

### **Descartes's Clock**

In the Principles, Descartes says that he wants to reduce all natural phenomena to the quantitative explanations of mathematics and geometry. Hence his commitment to basing knowledge only on clear and distinct ideas parallels his scientific presupposition that all natural phenomena have their clear and distinct essence in mathematical certitude. That animals are machines follows

logically (some might say conveniently) from both the application of methodic doubt, and the principles of mechanism.

Descartes's belief in the doctrine of animal automatism, then, should not be viewed as the approval of a convenient metaphor; the view that animals are machines was maintained consistently throughout his writings with his concomitant belief that mind and body were composed of different substances. That animals were organic beings he did not dispute, but the requisite *explanans* covering the whole of their somatic structure as well as their outward behavior could be derived, he argued, from the same principles by which inanimate objects and processes were explained. "Animation" was simply an effect of mechanical action.

But what set of ideas lay back of Descartes's mechanical philosophy; in what sense did he use the term? As Morton Becker has pointed out, "the term 'mechanism' has no fixed meaning, although it is almost generally regarded as a term of abuse" (1972: 260). This may be true today, but it has become so mainly through disputes between humanistic and positivistic philosophical traditions. Nothing essentially reprehensible in mechanical explanations as such exists. For instance, if we mean by mechanism that

natural phenomena can be explained by a broad range of naturalistic laws and principles, then, generally speaking, we are on relatively safe and uncontroversial ground. It could even be argued that by this definition most vitalists would be mechanists of a sort. Yet if we take 'mechanism' to imply the more extreme claim, that all natural phenomena can be explained entirely in terms of matter and motion, then we are invoking a definition that many would oppose.

Cartesian mechanism is of this more extreme variety. In particular, Descartes denied that final causes or vital forces could be applied in explaining animal behavior. In Descartes's mechanical philosophy, all objects in the universe, and their various modes of behavior and action, are explained in terms of matter and motion. The mechanical philosophy, in other words, seeks to find essential explanations for natural phenomena in the structure of non-teleological principles that can be expressed in mathematical terms. The mechanical philosophy, as Descartes elaborated it, is noted for denying to nature any characteristics that might be associated with mind, spirit, consciousness, or soul. Nature is a non-vital arena in this view; that is, organic life is without vitalistic principles, but is maintained and governed entirely by

mechanistic processes. Thus in Descartes's mechanical philosophy animals are unable to act intentionally.

The mechanistic doctrine, as Merchant has observed, was a solution to seventeenth century concerns about increasing cultural relativism. In part, mechanism "arose as an antidote to intellectual uncertainty and as a new rational basis for social stability" (1980: 194). In much the way that Charles V's edict that Parisians regulate their daily affairs according to the bells of the palace clock brought the commercial forces of France into an organized system, so too mechanism brought order to the natural world (Postman, 1992). But while the medieval clock chimed to celebrate the approaching triumph of commerce over Papal authority, the mechanical philosophy signaled the beginning of an era in which science would replace ancient traditions and superstitions. The power of the clock to regulate social and natural events was a common metaphor for Descartes and his contemporaries.

In her classic study From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine (1940), Leonora Rosenfield argues that Descartes was drawn to a mechanistic interpretation of nature in large part because he found the exquisite adaptations of animals to their environments to be beyond any explanation that invoked consciousness or planning. How could bees, for instance,

construct hives so meticulously if not out of some power for planning and design? Descartes could not abide the conceit that bees and other animals were capable of reflective thought, for his investigations had convinced him that consciousness was a singularly human phenomenon since mentation implied the presence of a soul. Hence he sought a different explanation for the apparent "perfection" of animal behavior in the mechanical philosophy. In a celebrated passage from the Discourse he wrote:

Though there are many animals which manifest more industry than we in certain of their actions, the same animals are yet observed to show none at all in many others: so that the circumstance that they do better than we do does not prove that they are endowed with mind, for it would thence follow that they possessed greater reason than any of us, and could surpass us in all things; on the contrary, it rather proves that they are destitute of reason, and that it is nature which acts in them according to the disposition of their organs: thus it is seen that a clock composed only of wheels and weights can number the hours and measure the time more exactly than we with all our skill. (1978a: 46)

There is no ingenuity in animals, but only the working out of processes which, strictly speaking, admit no possibility of choice. In a sense, talk of 'natural laws' is all but nonsensical in this regard as well, for there is no prospect of violation--save, perhaps, for miracles. Descartes's appreciation for the complexity of animal behavior was resolved with his claim that complexity in action, and creativity in intention, could be separated into different metaphysical spheres. "Underlying mechanisms" were evidence of God's purpose only. Animal purpose was diffused across the whole of nature, transformed into an instantiation of divine purpose.

A more immediate (and more pedestrian) explanation for Descartes's fascination with mechanism could be found in the French Royal Gardens, and its collection of hydraulically controlled robots. In his Treatise of Man Descartes wrote:

You may have seen in the grottoes and fountains which are in our royal gardens that the simple force with which water moves in issuing from its source is sufficient to put into motion various machines and even to set various instruments playing or to make them pronounce words according to the varied disposition of the tubes which convey the water.... For in entering [people] necessarily tread on certain tiles or plates,

which are so disposed that if they approach a bathing Diana, they cause her to hide in the rosebushes, and if they try to follow her, they cause Neptune to come forward to meet them threatening them with his trident.

(Descartes, 1972: 21-22)

The design of these hydraulic automatons suggested to Descartes that it would be possible to fashion even more elaborate mechanisms that observers could be deceived into believing were animate beings.<sup>7</sup> The water in the robots of the Royal Gardens corresponded to the blood that circulated in the body, and the springs and motors were obvious parallels of the body's tendons and muscles. Descartes concluded that it was possible to explain much of our involuntary behavior--reflexes, specifically--in the same

---

<sup>7</sup> This belief shows how Descartes grounded the credibility of automatism partly on the dubitable status of everyday modes of inference. Hence the process of methodic doubt, and the metaphysics of mechanism, are cinched together tightly. That I cannot say for certain that my cat is not a machine is the preliminary step toward the abolition of non-human sentience; that is, the merely probable claim of feline sentience must be suspended in favor of a more parsimonious, mechanistic account. However, the movement toward any form of metaphysical supposition involving subjective states in animals is subsequently blocked by the mechanical philosophy's interest in delegitimizing teleological accounts of animal behavior. To presume that my cat "knows" and "feels" things is to misappropriate terminology and to step outside of the mechanical philosophy. But the world beyond mechanism is fraught with uncertainty, and therefore offers no compass for discovering the direction in which truth lies.

way as the movements of these inventions were explained (Flanagan, 1984; Lubar, 1993). Mind-body dualism ex-corporated thinking, and in-corporated mechanism.

### **Descartes's Ethics**

Mind-body dualism also ex-corporated morality. Descartes argued that although animals might display the outward signs of consciousness--as when they cry out when struck--these visible expressions are in fact triggered by mechanistic processes inherent to the animal body. Hence animal cries are actually indications of the extraordinary care with which God designed the universe. When an animal is struck, it cries out not in pain, as human beings understand that experience, but because the mechanical principles on which the animal is based are so exquisitely intricate, that they include the expression of internal states that do not actually exist. Just as a clock will strike midnight with no internal states corresponding to the knowledge that a person would have when announcing the time, so too animals present the outward manifestations of subjective states, but with none of the correlative aspects of mentation, understanding, or feeling that would define that event for us.

The ethical implications of this perspective did not elude Descartes, who defended himself from critics sympathetic to animals by declaring that his view "is not so much cruel to animals as indulgent to men.... since it absolves them from the suspicion of crime when they eat or kill animals" (letter to Henry More, February 5, 1649).

This is a remarkable claim, encapsulating what I take to be the essential elements of what I have referred to earlier as a kind of reason-constitutive ethics that is embedded in Cartesian metaphysics. What is compelling about this argument is not simply the fact that Descartes has applied the mechanical philosophy to ethics--though that is a significant point itself. The more crucial issue, I maintain, is that Descartes's ethics involve *the alleviation of responsibility*; to act ethically according to this plan, is to act in such a way as to acknowledge the primacy of (abstract) principles, and to accept those principles so long as they release one from "the suspicion of crime." This describes an ethical code that is justified mainly on epistemological grounds. As Bauman has said, the function of ethical precepts is to eliminate responsibility. So too Descartes suggests that one of the key aspects of his doctrine of animal automatism is that we can assure ourselves of our innocence if we are persuaded of the

scientific soundness of his doctrine. One is freed from remorse or guilt in accepting the legitimacy of mechanism.

A parallel case can be found today. As Ronald Melzack and Patrick Wall have argued, "our ideas about pain in children are dominated by the myth that young children do not feel pain as intensely as adults, and therefore require fewer analgesics or none at all" (1988: 274). Melzack and Wall further point out that

in one study, more than 50 per cent of children who underwent major surgery--including limb amputation, excision of a cancerous neck mass, and heart surgery--were not given any analgesics, and the remainder received inadequate doses. Statistics such as these are found in virtually every study that examines the treatment of severe pain in children. (1988: 274)

The myth that children do not feel pain as acutely as adults arose in large measure out of a strong desire to believe that the helpless child could not suffer. Rather than suggest that the child's lack of suffering was related to its not having a soul, however, it was said that the infant and young child did not yet have the requisite nerve structure that made pain experiences possible. Yet all of this reasoning was frequently challenged by those who "saw" pain in the child's facial expressions and behaviors.

Still, the doctrine held (and continues to be of limited influence today) because it may have alleviated health professionals of the "suspicion of crime" when performing invasive medical practices on children.

In the context of Descartes's argument, one might ask what is the source of this "suspicion of crime"? In other words, in the face of countervailing evidence in the form of the doctrine of animal automatism, why would one continue to feel guilty about mistreating an animal? Why would the vivisectionist cut the vocal chords of the dog on which he was experimenting if the sounds the dog made were only the product of a machine (Horkheimer, 1972: 152)?

As Descartes has suggested, the suspicion of crime arises from an unrestrained will, and, according to Cartesian epistemology, therefore, is a factual error. Given additional understanding (i.e., acknowledging the truth of animal automatism) the will's impulse to act in a manner contrary to truth could be reined in. But if this is so, then one of the main advantage of Descartes's work for ethical thought is the view that empirical knowledge can be put to service in restraining our natural impulses toward sympathy.

Moral ambiguities, however, are rarely clear and distinct; Descartes's argument that we can resolve them by

fidelity to a rational code of ethical precepts belies the subjective reality of our embodied relations with others. Descartes's tree of knowledge is reified into a hierarchical structure, and mind-body dualism, as Derrida and others have commented, becomes the logic of hierarchy and domination (Derrida, 1981; Plumwood, 1993). Moral problems must first be converted into empirical questions if they are to be resolved at all. Thinking of animals as automata is one way to resolve the problem of cruelty by relieving people of the responsibility (and sympathy) they might otherwise feel for other creatures.

Moreover, it is apparent that Descartes's emphasis on the power of reason to overcome the propensities of the will suggests that his belief in the unreliability of the body--the senses, the passions--has a moral as well as an epistemological dimension. And localizing the source of our immoral inclinations in the will puts morality at the service of the soul--or passion and sentiment at the service of the mind and reason.<sup>8</sup> The key issue would seem to be the

---

<sup>8</sup> For present purposes this is adequately stated, but a fuller account is warranted. The source of moral error really lies in the *failure of the relation between will and reason*, for this relation, to use one of Descartes's images, is really that of a pilot in a vessel (1978b:135). When the pilot has lost control, the vessel can err (stray). Strictly speaking, then, the "source" of moral err is non-localizable; it comes into being at the moment that reason is not invoked to restrain the will from a socially

parallels he has drawn between immoral conduct and unreliability, for this posits a view of moral behavior as contingent upon what is epistemologically reliable. As I suggested earlier, this mode of analysis reveals the reason discursive ethics that ultimately is embedded in Cartesian metaphysics.

Although Descartes suggests it is possible to achieve moral certainty by submitting passion to the dictates of reason, he also acknowledges the ambiguity of moral conflicts when he separates the source of immoral tendencies

---

inappropriate behavior. But this argument raises additional questions: how can we know when, in the event of reason's abdication of its duty, that moral (as opposed to epistemological) errors are produced? Although we can know epistemological errors as failures of reason to attend only to those ideas that are clear and distinct, Descartes has given us no way of knowing how to distinguish moral from immoral tendencies in the will. He tends to shift the burden for this explanation to immediate knowledge of the social mores and customs currently in societal favor, but this does not provide us with the necessary metaphysical grounding we have become accustomed to in his reasoning. In The Passions of the Soul he does speak of evil intentions and excesses that can corrupt the will, and in his letters he does suggest that virtue always entails "a firm and constant resolution to carry out whatever reason recommends without being diverted by passion or appetite" (Descartes, 1970: 165). In this explanation reason retains its privileged station but now appears to be both arbiter and executor of moral conduct. And with this explanation we have not moved any closer toward resolving the difficulty of determining the essential aspect of moral error. As Rorty has said, Cartesian values are without metaphysical grounding, for the will has "nothing like clear and distinct ideas to ratify--or even to support--its inclinations" (1992: 388). The will in Descartes's philosophy is absolutely unconditioned.

from intellection. Thus in the Principles he suggests that there are really two sorts of certainty: absolute certainty, which, as we have seen, is established on the metaphysical grounds of the *cogito* and God's infinite goodness; and moral certainty, which is a "certainty sufficient for the conduct of life" (1978c: 227). But moral certainty, by this definition, is oxymoronic, for he concedes that what is "morally certain may be false" (1978c: 227).

Moral certainty, then, is really *moral expediency*, as Descartes makes evident in the Third Part of the Discourse. Here he discusses the rebuilding of philosophy that he is undertaking, stating that as his work proceeds he will require interim accommodations. Given that he has suspended knowledge of all that he formerly took as truth, how shall he conduct his life in the absence of certain truth? What code of morals must he follow? His solution is a "provisory code of morals" composed of three maxims (1978a: 19).<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> As Gadamer points out, Descartes's program of methodic doubt has broken down at this juncture, for Descartes has found it impossible to defer completely his acceptance of moral obligation (Gadamer, 1975: 248). Whereas he has experienced no difficulty in rejecting the claims of the ancients, or in doubting the veracity of his own senses, he is unable to reject the facticity of obligatory relations. This suggests not only that the project for methodic doubt was doomed to an early demise on the shoals of moral commitment, but that obligation confounds reason even as it asserts its primacy in the relation of being for the Other. The condition of human being, as Levinas expresses it, is

First, he says that he will obey the laws and customs of his society and choose a moderate course of conduct. He recognizes and acknowledges that people in other countries might act differently (ethical relativism), but says that "expediency seemed to dictate that I should regulate my practice conformably to the opinions of those with whom I should have to live" (19). Moderation is valued because, in the event of having chosen wrongly, moderation will ensure that he is equidistant from the truth. In addition, moderation will prevent him from adopting an opinion he may later be forced to change.

His second maxim is to be "as firm and resolute in my actions as I was able." Rather than wander from precept to precept, then, he will select those which are most probable and adhere to them as a traveler who, lost in a forest, should "proceed constantly towards the same side in as straight a line as possible" (1978a: 20). This maxim follows from his belief that when "it is not in our power to determine what is true, we ought to act according to what is most probable" (21), an argument, incidentally, that runs directly counter to his claim that methodic doubt compels us

---

the condition of being-obliged. Or, to put it yet another way, that Descartes is unable to dispense with obligation suggests its irreducibility, a conclusion Levinas would draw with support from Løgstrup (1971), Derrida (1990), Bauman (1993, 1995), and Caputo (1993).

to do away with the merely probable. This is our first hint, then, that moral certainty and absolute certainty, though both determined in the realm of *res cogitans*, are achieved by rather different means.

In addition, Descartes has also explained that reason should guide our moral decisions no less than it should help to determine our epistemological claims. The directive potential of probability thus makes evident that moral knowledge is a lesser form of knowing, quite separate, apparently, from that sphere of clear and distinct ideas in which truth can be found. Despite Descartes's desire to make moral conduct answerable to rational deduction, moral and absolute certainty, then, are only connected in a tentative manner.

Finally, he suggests as his third maxim "to endeavor always to conquer myself rather than fortune, and change my desires rather than the order of the world" (21). To adhere to this maxim will render him content, he argues, and thereby prevent his will from outstripping his means:

for since our will naturally seeks those objects alone which the understanding represents as in some way possible of attainment, it is plain, that if we consider all external goods as equally beyond our power, we shall no more regret the absence of such

goods as seem due to our birth, when deprived of them without any fault of ours, than our not possessing the kingdoms of China or Mexico; and thus making, so to speak, a virtue of necessity, we shall no more desire health in disease, or freedom in imprisonment, than we now do bodies incorruptible as diamonds, or the wings of birds to fly with. (1978a: 21)

In these maxims Descartes makes evident his commitment to the view that reason should shape our moral lives, even as he makes evident other difficulties this view presents to him. Descartes establishes an ethical code which is intended explicitly to subsume and constrain natural impulse. The autonomy of the moral subject, as Levinas would argue, is made subordinate to the heteronomy of the ethical system. Descartes's provisional code of ethics is a rational response to the ambivalent nature of moral thinking; it is a response, which in stressing moderation, linear progress, and restraint of passion, privileges the very form of intellectual endeavor that has taken him to the conclusion that moral error can be checked by reason. That is, Descartes's project ex-corporates morality by transforming all responsibility into a codified ethics in the province of *res cogitans*. The unreliability of the body is tantamount to the unreliability of moral knowledge. And

whereas Descartes struggles to find a way to enable reason to provide the necessary grounding for morality, he is forced to adopt provisional tactics instead of a cohesive and over-arching strategy.

The mechanical philosophy provided rational order in the natural sciences, and helped to make ethical order possible. Ethics has always had as one of its main attractions the power to make choices for the good contingent upon a knowledge of theological, legislative, or judicial codes. Ethics searches for ways to obliterate ambiguity. The surrender of autonomy required by ethics is celebrated as an expression of existential freedom; even today this contradiction persists. In Descartes's remark cited above, he speaks of freedom from guilt--freedom from the suspicion of crime--, yet this freedom depends on the capacity of the moral agent to *subordinate moral feelings to the demands of ethical precepts*. It is in this sense that mind-body dualism is the ex-corporation of morality.

### **Descartes's Zoo**

The significance of Descartes's work in relation to the animal rights movement is twofold. First, the doctrine of animal automatism has provided a sustaining rationale for the way we conceptualize and treat animals. Animal

automatism, though widely regarded today as something of an aberration of the French Enlightenment, continues to influence various branches in the social and natural sciences. In this respect, Descartes's philosophy influences the contemporary movement for animal rights by offering modern scientists and researchers a rationally grounded perspective on the ontology of animal nature. This perspective works in precisely the way that Descartes imagined his own views provided logical reasons for banishing from one's mind the worry that a mistreated animal was in any way an indication of sin or crime. The contemporary researcher's animal "model" is hardly different at all from Descartes's animal "machine."

Second, Descartes's metaphysics constitutes a form of rational discursive ethics. Cartesian ethics, derived from Descartes's metaphysics and epistemology, continue to influence modern thought and, despite the fact that his views are virtually anathema to the members of the animal rights movement, it seems, that significant aspects of Descartes's views in this regard actually influence animal activist thinking. In these concluding remarks I want to look at these two points in order.

To say that the doctrine of the animal machine has currency among intellectuals today will strike many as

hyperbole. Yet there is ready evidence of the claim. As recently as 1989, philosopher Peter Harrison argued that "we should speak of animal responses, not as reactions to pain, or expressions of pain, but rather as adaptive behaviors and physiological reactions to potentially damaging stimuli" (83-84). Harrison denies that animals can experience pain largely because it is not consistent, in his view, with evolutionary theory. More importantly, though, Harrison argues that

Descartes's view of animal pain, along with its concomitant theological advantages, can seriously be entertained without the necessity of subscribing to Descartes's unfortunate ontology. (81).

Thus Harrison argues that animals do not experience pain in the way that humans do largely because beasts are machines: "If no 'choice' is involved in animal behavior, why should they suffer pain--to *compel* them to behave in certain ways? No, for surely their behavior is determined in a way that does not require the superfluous promptings of pain" (84). Accepting the Darwinian view that adaptations must be for some purpose (and striking a rather Panglossian pose in doing so), Harrison argues that pain would be a redundant and therefore inefficient evolutionary strategy where animals are concerned. Instinct--or mechanical action--

should be sufficient to deter animals from acting in ways likely to result in injury or death. Pain, Harrison says, is *illogical* when conceptualized in regard to animal nature. Therefore, animals cannot experience pain as it would be scientifically unsound, and metaphysically untidy.

Like Descartes, Harrison invokes the image of the animal-machine to do away with the theological dilemma of animal suffering; like Descartes also, he resolves this conundrum by distinguishing between rationality and mechanism as determining the respective behaviors of people and creatures. That animals lack awareness and have no continuity of experience (i.e., are without mental activity) makes animal pain an implausibility (90ff.). Lest readers suspect that Harrison's argument enjoyed insignificant exposure, I point out that it was published in the international journal Philosophy.

There are many other illustrations of the influence of the doctrine of animal automatism on contemporary thinking in areas diverse as sociobiology (Dawkins, 1976; 1986; Wilson, 1975, 1978); information theory (Schrodinger, 1945; Wiener, 1954), cybernetics (Campbell, 1982), and artificial intelligence (Rifkin, 1987; Wolfe, 1993). The machine leitmotif also influenced the rise of "scientific management"--or Taylorism--where it was argued that workers

must be relieved of the responsibility of thinking, and should act like machines in order to be productive and efficient cogs in the industrial workplace (Taylor, 1911). Moreover, the mechanical philosophy, in treating aspects of *res extensa* as beyond the pale of moral concern, established the conditions which helped to naturalize the language and modes of analyses of science. In its turn, science became an ideological discourse to be used in the framing of human social relations. As Plumwood puts it:

The framework of reductive mechanism permits the emotional distance which enables power and control, killing and warfare, to seem acceptable, just as it did in the case of the animals Descartes's followers used for experimentation. The language of 'collateral damage', of 'body counts' and 'surgical strikes' is the language of reductive mechanism. It is the language too of the machine economy which increasingly dominates public life, in which 'gross domestic product' replaces 'good' or 'happiness' and people appear as market resources. In such a framework, the modern subject loses a sense of itself not only as an organic but as a social being, as an agent in and chooser of political, economic and technological frameworks. It comes to see itself and others as components of relentless machinery

rather than as active participants in a political community. Retrieving a sense of other beings in nature as diverse, richly relational individuals and as originative, intentional agents is also part of retrieving such a conception for ourselves in our social systems. (1993: 118-119)

Plumwood's critical theoretical position is overstated in places, although I believe her main point to be correct. The doctrine of animal automatism remains influential in part because it continues to be a central informing principle for what is construed as objective truth. Consequently the development and spread of mechanistic modes of analyses is extensive, and while it would be unfair to suggest that all of this can be put down to animal automatism, Plumwood is certainly correct in suggesting that this doctrine has played a decisive role.

Second, Descartes's philosophy articulates a form of reason discursive ethics, a perspective which has worked its way into the project for animal liberation. Although Singer and Regan are adamant in their respective denunciations of animal automatism, like Descartes they embrace ethical theories which privilege reason and treat empathic and sympathetic modes of relating to Others as contaminants in the project of ethical system building. Both writers insist

that we can be expected to treat animals with appropriate respect (rather than kindness) only if we are persuaded that to do so would be approved by specific forms of logical reasoning.

But this is merely an inversion of Descartes's argument that the putative mistreatment of animals is justified by the application of reason. More to the point, Descartes's argument suggests not so much that mistreatment and cruelty are justified, but that these become meaningless terms in the context of the mechanical philosophy's conceptualization of animals. The suspicion of crime (the immorality of animal mistreatment) is neutralized in the ethics of Cartesian philosophy in which the parsimonious logic of mechanism compels us to the view that the realm of *res extensa* is an amoral dimension.

In a similar vein, the idea that animals are mere automata is a meaningless concept in Singer and Regan's concept of animal being. Whereas cruelty and mistreatment are nonsensical concepts in the discourse of mechanism, these words are absolutely central in the vocabulary of animal activism. Nonetheless, Singer and Regan attempt to do battle with Descartes on territory of Descartes's choosing: the field of reason. Singer and Regan are quick to dismiss emotional attachment to animals as a hindrance to

the deployment of their philosophical forces. Peter Singer writes:

The portrayal of those who protest against cruelty to animals as sentimental, emotional "animal-lovers" has had the effect of excluding the entire issue of our treatment of nonhumans from serious political and moral discussion. (1975: xi)

Here Singer claims that an ethic for animal treatment should be founded solely on reason and science. Thus the animal rights movement is itself indebted to an epistemological project in much the fashion of Descartes's philosophy. So-called serious political and moral discussion can occur only in the privileged and abstract spheres of utilitarian and neo-Kantian ethics. The wholly moral aspect of our relations with Others--including non-human Others--is left entirely outside of the necessary calculations by which such projects are driven. The Cartesian edifice, constructed from rational principles, is self-sufficiently logical only to the extent that it successfully repudiates moral obligation. So too, I suggest, the contemporary animal rights movement seeks to develop a rational discursive ethics which not only fails to account for the ontological primacy of moral sentiment, but which actively seeks to make

these feelings illegitimate in the task of promoting animal welfare.

Native American activist Russell Means has said that "rationality is a curse since it can cause humans to forget the natural order of things in ways other creatures do not" (1988: 78). I believe that animal activists should take note of Means's claim. In accepting the terms of engagement over the question of animal rights as one in which reason and sentiment are antagonists, animal activists risk surrendering the autonomy of the moral subject to the control of a heteronomous, rational agenda. Whereas the project for ethical system building has continued to move in the direction first laid out for us in Descartes's mind-body dualism and the separation of human and animal nature, I would suggest that authentic moral autonomy resides precisely in that domain animal activists have sought to banish from the dialogue: the emotional and sympathetic dimension of our natures.

If Descartes is the avowed villain in the animal rights narrative, Charles Darwin is certainly one of the movement's champions. Darwin's theory of evolution with its insistence on the thesis of biological continuity has been a vital mainstay of the contemporary animal rights movement, providing important scientific evidence for the claim that

animals warrant moral compassion. It is to Darwin, then,  
that I turn next.

**CHAPTER FOUR:  
EVOLUTIONARY CONTINUITY  
AND THE IMMANENCE OF MORAL BEING**

Since nature makes nothing purposeless or in vain, it is undeniably true that she has made all animals for the sake of man.

- Aristotle

That the state of the body by affecting the brain, has great influence on the moral tendencies is known to most of those who have suffered from chronic derangements of the digestion or liver.

- Charles Darwin

If nobility is defined as reasoned generosity beyond expedience, animal liberation would be the ultimate ennobling act.

- Edward Wilson

Reuters News Agency

LONDON – The owner of a wandering cat has bought a telephone chargecard for her flighty feline so people can phone home and say where the black Burmese has strayed in search of adventure.

Beryl Venters said six-year-old Cagney was always walking away from her home in the southern English city of Winchester. So Cagney has a chargecard attached to her collar.

“Cagney is always sticking her nose into things and running off chasing anything that moves. The chargecard means anyone who finds her will be able to phone me and tell me where she is without having to pay,” Ms. Venters told reporters. December 4, 1995.

### **Evolutionary Continuity**

Descartes's work has had an enduring influence on contemporary animal rights philosophy, chiefly in the form of an antagonistic project against which animal rights activists have contrastively defined their ambitions. A second, countervailing influence on animal rights thinking has been the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin.

Hans Jonas has remarked that “evolutionism undid Descartes's work more effectively than any metaphysical

critique had managed to do" (1966: 57). Certainly in the domain of our understanding of animals this is true. Whereas Cartesian mechanism split animals and humans apart, Darwinism established the thesis of continuity of descent between humans and animals on the basis of scientific investigations, and thus inverted the hierarchical structuring of mind-body dualism. Continuity of descent challenged the view that mind was discontinuous with somatic being because it suggested a direct, historical relation between biological and cognitive development. Hence with the appearance of evolutionary theory, Jonas argues, *res cogitans* became *res extensa*; or, as Ghiselin (1969) has argued, Darwinism signaled the victory of materialism.

Jonas's assessment is substantially correct, though elements of Cartesian thinking persisted in certain aspects of the Darwinian scheme of ethics, especially in the works of Darwin's colleague Thomas Huxley and, to a lesser degree, Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of the principle of natural selection. But Jonas's main point holds good. The thesis of evolutionary continuity grounded cognition in animality. It also suggested that the narrative of human history must begin with our animal nature, and that each aspect of our biological, spiritual, cultural, and moral being has its natural starting point in a prehuman history.

The Darwinian view did not settle all metaphysical debates, but it did suggest a formulation that entailed a change in metaphors.

Of course, the very notion of the *prehuman*, readily thematized today, raised significant metaphysical difficulties in an age where human history was construed as the history of civilization (Eisley, 1958; Oldroyd, 1980). Talk of the prehuman suggested that historical inquiry could no longer be limited to the already-human being. Darwinism posited an anterior history in which animal being, the grounding for all subsequent human being, assumed both temporal and ontological priority; evolution claimed that our history is written in our bodies, from vestigial organs to discursive reason. Animals brought the human past into the present, emerging as indexical signs of a prehuman condition.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In semiotics a distinction is often drawn between an *icon*, a *symbol*, and an *index*, each of them being understood as a particular form of sign. An icon is said to bear a direct resemblance to the object it represents, a statue serving as a good illustration. A symbol is said to be connected to its object by agreement or convention. Thus words, which are arbitrary in a way that icons are not, are usually understood as symbols. Finally, an index is said to bear a direct existential connection with its object. Thus smoke is often said to be an index of fire, a footprint an indexical sign of a creature, or a sneeze an index of a cold. I have referred to animals as indexical signs to indicate that they bear a direct existential relation to humans according to evolutionary theory in that, like

The thesis of evolutionary continuity also made it difficult to dismiss the relation between people and animals as a product of God's creative economy, or as an accidental consequence of biological functioning (Gillespie, 1979). The relations that were perceived in both the analogous and homologous structures of humans and animals were relations steeped in common history. Following Darwin, the family resemblances between living things compelled naturalists to question the episodic creation myth told in Genesis in favor of the serial narrative told by nature. Whereas Aristotle had sought to explain lower forms of life in terms of the higher, Darwin explained the higher in terms of the lower, making animals one of the keys to our species self-understanding (Cassirer, 1944). To ignore animal being was to risk misunderstanding human being entirely.

Hence the impact of Darwin's ideas on the question of animal rights was decisive. Darwin not only gave evidence of evolutionary continuity and the kinship of the organic order, but he demonstrated also that moral sentiment exists in proportionate degrees in the behavior of other mammals. He argued that morality is a natural, immanent phenomenon by conjoining the human moral sense with various formations of

---

footprints, they show the historical traces of a common biological history.

sociality among animals. He also suggested that in this conjunction our tendency for sympathetic concern for other creatures found a scientific explanation. In other words, *Darwin provided a scientific foundation for in-corporating morality.* And in so doing, he also provided a different set of reasons for examining our sense of moral regard for specific kinds of animals such as mammals. But joining our evolutionary history closely with the development of other creatures, Darwin hinted at what might be called the *neighbor hypothesis*: that certain species, alongside of which humans co-evolved, have figured prominently in the way in which our sense of obligations have arisen. It may be that the immemorial past of which Levinas speaks is reflected in the visage of the animal Other.

In this chapter I will focus on two specific ways in which Darwinian theory influences the animal rights movement. The first concerns the thesis of evolutionary continuity; that is, the position that common descent (evolutionary continuity) should compel us to common decency (moral continuity). This thesis is more complex than an initial observation might reveal, for Darwin's treatment of the implications of our historical relations with animals showed remarkable sensitivity to the moral considerations

that follow from taking a dynamic or temporalized view of life.

The second issue I focus on in this chapter is the claim that moral sentiment is an in-corporated phenomenon, that morality, in other words, has arisen as a consequence of the operation of natural selection and cultural evolution. To the criticism that I am assuming an essentialist position I will offer a tentative plea of guilty. I do not, however, concede that the view that morality is an incorporated phenomenon is a form of biologism. Whereas Descartes considered our somatic relation to animals irrelevant and epiphenomenal, it was precisely this relation that excited Darwin's interests. It is important to understand that as embodied beings, some account of our somatic essence must be included in our views of metaphysics. As Jonas has said, "a philosophy of life comprises the philosophy of the organism and the philosophy of mind" (1966: 1). In like fashion I want to suggest that any account of our moral condition that fails to consider the body is an incomplete reckoning of our moral being. Although it is traditionally argued that ethics entails the elevation of human social conduct over the rude dictates of animal instinct, Darwin argued that it is in the very fact

of our animal heritage that morality comes at all to be. Morality is prefigured in the legacy of our animal past.

### **Time and the Chain of Being**

Conventional wisdom has it that the modern history of animals begins with Darwin (Scholtmeijer, 1993). There are good and obvious reasons why this is so. Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) forever changed the relative positions of humans and animals by establishing, on scientific grounds, the biological kinship of all living beings. His investigations of human evolution in The Descent of Man (1871), and further research in The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (1872), drew important conclusions regarding the ways in which even the most sophisticated human behavior can be linked to analogous expressions and displays in other animals. In this respect Darwinism offered a historical explanation for the traces of animality we observe in human being; it also offered an account of the traces of humanity we perceive in animals.

Darwin is commonly said to have elevated non-human creatures from their position of relative insignificance in a theistic cosmology to a loftier place in the secular cosmology of science. As Jonas puts it, Darwin restored dignity to the whole realm of life (1966: 57). Arguing that

the difference between animal and human intelligence was a matter of degree and not kind, Darwin proclaimed that developmental continuity suggested the possibility of somatic and moral progress, envisioning a world where "the struggle between our higher and lower impulses will be less severe, and virtue will be triumphant" (1871: 494). Darwin's degree, not kind assumed a philosophic and historical significance not unlike Descartes's cogito, ergo sum.<sup>2</sup>

Animal rights activists see the concept of evolutionary continuity as prescribing moral obligation towards animals. Shared evolutionary histories, in other words, reframe the otherness of the animal as a claim on our moral

---

<sup>2</sup> Darwin's conception of moral progress is clearly at odds with the more plainly scientific aspects of his theory. Given that progress was described throughout the Origin as resulting from competitive struggle, it is unclear how a "higher morality" which would see people willingly sacrifice their energies for the indigent, the insane, and the dying could be called progressive in the evolutionary sense of the term. One solution would be to speak of two forms of evolution: biological evolution, which describes the development of the human species strictly in terms of somatic transformation, and cognitive (or cultural) evolution, which speaks of the evolution of mind and society as a distinct process. This was the strategy adopted by Darwin's colleague Alfred Russel Wallace, but a tactic Darwin himself refused. Thomas Huxley, Darwin's principal advocate, was equally troubled by the discord between somatic and moral progress, eventually concluding that moral progress was in no way connected with the scientific facts described in evolutionary theory. (For more on this discussion see Greene, 1959, 1981).

responsibility, and not merely as a consideration for scientific taxonomy. "Movements for animal rights are not irrational denials of human uniqueness," Haraway, writes, "they are a clear-sighted recognition of connection across the discredited breach of nature and culture" (1991: 152). Humans and other species are shaped by environmental and cosmic processes; these processes in turn offer grounds for certain metaphysical considerations. To accept the moral implications of the thesis of evolutionary continuity, is to accept at the same time that the immediate physiological differences between people and animals should be differences of no material consequence in the articulation of ethical precepts.<sup>3</sup> In offering an explanation for the manifest differences between humans and animals, Darwin's work dissipated the force of the argument that physiological differences--even at the level of species--are material justification for differences in moral importance.

---

<sup>3</sup> One commonly encounters the argument favored by animal rights activists that their opponents are guilty of the naturalistic fallacy; that is, guilty of arguing from a certain class of scientific facts (formations of biological discontinuity, for example) to prescribed modes of ethical indifference. However, it should be clear that the criticism goes both ways, and some animal activists have tried to argue from an alternative class of biological facts (formations of evolutionary continuity) to prescribed modes of ethical consideration. A more complete discussion of this issue--albeit with a sociobiological orientation--can be found in Ruse and Wilson, 1986.

This claim has greatly influenced animal rights philosophers like Peter Singer, who writes that despite its venerable origins, the view that the effects of our actions on nonhuman animals have no intrinsic moral significance can be shown to be arbitrary and morally indefensible. *If a being suffers, the fact that it is not a member of our own species cannot be a moral reason for failing to take its suffering into account....* The logic of racism and the logic of..."speciesism"...are indistinguishable; and if we reject the former then consistency demands that we reject the latter too. (1979: 193, my italics)

In line with Singer's reasoning, many animal activists interpret phylogenetic continuity as a logical foundation for moral consideration. It is their argument that the thesis of evolutionary continuity removed moral sensibility from its transcendent position in the context of mind and society and placed it in the immanence of the germ-plasm. That is, speciesism is one of the ways in which we have taken a scientific practice meant only for classification purposes, and transformed it into a technique for establishing certain kinds of moral divisions.

The temporal aspect of developmental continuity was an important factor throughout much of Darwin's work, appearing

in a number of writings aside from his work on evolutionary biology. His 1877 *Biographical Sketch of an Infant*, for instance, suggested the continuity of being/identity throughout the stages of developmental transformation that took place as children mature. In a similar fashion, the theory of evolution described transformations in the organic world implying both continuity of somatic form, and the prefigurement of cognitive abilities in the ingenuity of animal mentation. Ontogeny may not recapitulate phylogeny, but it did provide a compelling analogy for determining the scope of our moral relations.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike the biological determinism implied in the thesis of recapitulation, Darwin's theory of evolutionary morality was an indeterminate account insofar as it prescribed no

---

<sup>4</sup>I am not suggesting that Darwin was an advocate of the recapitulation theory, but only that he relied heavily on the unarticulated linkage between the thesis of evolutionary continuity on the one side, and a naturalistic theory of moral development on the other. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that Darwin's position on the recapitulation doctrine was at times ambivalent, and in the *Origin* he does speak of the morphological similarities in embryos as being perfectly accounted for by evolutionary theory:

The embryo is the animal in its less modified state; and in so far it reveals the structure of its progenitor.... Community in embryonic structure reveals community of descent. (1859: 427)

It might also be noted that in his *Biographical Sketch of an Infant* (1877) Darwin discusses the appearance and development of the moral sense in his son, outlining a hierarchical sequence of transformations that parallel those

practical forms of conduct. To fathom the full extent to which our moral sense was a result of certain behavioral adaptations to environmental circumstances was not to be confused with having discovered a blueprint for moral edification.<sup>5</sup> Darwin did not claim to have shown us the means by which we could uncouple the is/ought distinction. The theory of evolution presented an historical narrative of our relation to other animals as a contingent product of the history of life, and while this gave credence to the view that morality is a consequence of a process of natural development, it also neutralized the metaphysical differences between people and animals that were central to Christian thought, emphasizing instead our many points of similarity.

In this respect, Darwin replaced a metaphysics of (Cartesian/Christian) difference with a materialist theory of similarity. Morality was an immanent phenomenon conditioned by a specific concourse of natural processes. Darwinism redrew the maps delineating the territories of the human and animal kingdoms; it forced a rethinking of the static cartography of the (largely) Christian map itself,

---

discussed in The Descent of Man (1971) where the evolution of morality of animals is considered.

<sup>5</sup>A similar point concerning Levinas's ethical philosophy has been made by Werhane (1995).

while questioning the value of the boundaries as well as their locations.

The pre-Darwinian, Christian perspective on animals was not entirely without some measure of compassion, but the way in which kindness to animals was discussed was largely circumscribed by a fear that moral consideration for animals might impair our capacity to treat members of our own species with appropriate charity (Ritvo, 1987; Salisbury, 1994; Thomas, 1983). The rigid, hierarchical structure found in the Christian adaptation of the Chain of Being spoke of benevolence toward the less fortunate beasts by advising sympathy for their miseries, while denying that our feelings should follow from a sense of true, unmediated moral obligation. Sympathy for animals was possible because we stood at such distance from them in the Chain, for sympathy, which is subject to the attraction of moral gravity, flows only downward, connecting the highest to the lowest in a relationship that emphasized our ethical and spiritual differences.<sup>6</sup> Christian-inspired forms of sympathy--what Nietzsche referred to as "the most sinister symptom of a European culture that had itself become sinister"--were based on the presupposition of superiority,

---

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle wrote that "love can only go upward", suggesting that this is how plants serve animals, animals serve humans, and women serve men. See Noske, 1997, p. 43ff.

and as such, denied that empathic feelings for animals were possible (Nietzsche, 1887: 19). Sympathy for animals could be tolerated in the Christian scheme only to the extent that its exercise made manifest the spiritual differences between people and animals and gave evidence of our exalted natures. Sympathy, on this account, was simply an expression of power.

Further, the Christian view of the Chain of Being represented an order of creation that contained no evidence of developmental progress in its structure. It refused entirely notions of relatedness beyond those which were derived from appearances: all things were related insofar as they are products of God's creation; all things thus have their (pre-)ordained place in the Chain (Lovejoy, 1936). Augustine claimed that although we may neither cherish nor love "hurtful or superfluous" creatures, their place in the universe has been secured by virtue of the function they play in eliminating gaps in the chain. Thus "although they are not necessary to our service," he writes, "yet the whole design of the universe is thereby completed and finished" (cited in White, 1896: 30). This doctrine of plenitude held for several centuries. Each new discovery in biology could be accounted for in advance, as predetermined locations along the Chain sat vacant in anticipation of fulfillment.

Hence the biological sciences prior to the acceptance of Darwin's views, often served only as the means by which the scriptural account of creation might be confirmed. The location of fossils, for instance, was said to confirm the Noachian deluge in that the heavier beasts (dinosaurs) would have sunk lower into the sediment and the mud, while birds, which could have escaped the rising waters for a longer time, would be deposited closer to the earth's crust (Bowler, 1984; Oldroyd, 1989). Thus the history of animals as told by fossil remains in no wise contradicted what the Bible stated.

The Christian Chain of Being was an *ordering mechanism* that functioned to reduce the ambivalence of natural history by setting out the relations among plants and animals according to the authority of prevailing interpretations of scriptures. In addition, the order described by the Chain had social and theological analogues in the class relations of the times, and the constitution of the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Bowler, 1984; Easley, 1958; Lovejoy, 1936). The Chain of Being served to legitimate the Christian perspective that nature, culture, and morality were inviolable, immutable, necessary creations of God.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the accumulation of scientific evidence suggesting that life

could be understood as a dynamic sequence of historical connections through common ancestry began the process of temporalizing the Chain. The stasis of the Christian Chain gradually was replaced with genealogical explanations and sequences of developmental series that spoke of a dynamic process and the unfolding of living forms through time. Even before Charles Darwin, a number of naturalists had begun to suspect that the key to understanding homologies among animals might be descent with modification from a common organic pattern.<sup>7</sup> When Darwin argued that natural selection was the underlying principle explaining the way in which living forms had descended from common ancestors, the place of history, or geological time, was secured as an indispensable part of the biological sciences.

The historicizing of biology may seem a distant concern for animal ethics. But the process of temporalization not only opened vistas into the past, it also pointed toward the future as a realm where uncertainty and possibility were writ large; indeterminacy, in other word, became a guiding

---

<sup>7</sup>Glass et. al. (1968) provide interesting discussions of the pre-Darwinian naturalists who first debated the possibility of species modification and the impact this idea held for the Chain of Being. Although most rejected the idea that species were mutable--favoring instead various theses concerning intra-specific transformation--many openly toyed with the prospect that the fossil record cried out for a more radical explanation that challenged the doctrine of species fixity. See also Wilkie, 1973.

theme in the contemplation of historical movement. The present, and its self-assured sense of an unalterable having-arrived-at sensibility was cast into doubt. As Michel Foucault has argued, although Darwinian evolution admitted materialist explanations into the Chain of Being, it was the *open-endedness* of the newly temporalized Chain that distinguished it most clearly from the a-historical character of the Christian perspective. In the Christian view, "the living being was a locality of natural classification," whereas following temporalization, "the fact of being classifiable [became] a property of the living being" (Foucault, 1970: 268). Temporalization rendered all systems of classification subservient to the essence of the living creature, and pointed up degrees of relatedness--or historical proximity--as these were determined by increasingly sophisticated biological studies. Suddenly the scale of life was in flux, and positioning along the scale became a matter for historical determination. Proximity, in terms of our relative (and temporal) closeness to other creatures, redefined the Chain of Being as an ec-static configuration.<sup>8</sup> Temporality linked us more firmly than ever to the vagaries of natural history.

---

<sup>8</sup> The use of the term "proximity" in this context articulates with Levinas's work. I will take this point up in the subsequent chapter.

In addition to promoting a new awareness of the biological-historical kinship of living beings, temporalization suggested the possibility that common lineage might prescribe a revolution in ethical thinking. This prospect was profoundly upsetting for many nineteenth century commentators, who saw in the thesis of temporalization the growing specter of uncertainty. As Darwin's nemesis Bishop Wilberforce and other critics of evolution observed, the absolutist ethics codified in Christian theology could not be maintained in the light of scientific arguments which historicized the idea of ethical behavior (see for example Fawcett, 1860). The doctrine of moral immutability was no longer supportable in a world where historical change and ongoing social transformation were inscribed in the depths of what had been regarded formerly as an unalterable human essence. Temporalization helped to usher in the view that ethical precepts were relative by grounding the moral sentiments in the ambivalent and contingent history of evolutionary diversity. It was not just that morality became a product of natural events that was disconcerting, but that a specifically Christian morality no longer seemed a necessary condition or property of human being.

Darwin's conjectures on this subject were discussed widely by his contemporaries and continue to be debated in the branch of philosophy known as evolutionary ethics (Caplan, 1978; Stent, 1978; Richards, 1986; Ruse, 1986; Ruse and Wilson, 1986; Rachels, 1989). Many of Darwin's critics felt that the evolutionary perspective's principal failing was that it severed all connection between reason and morality, undoing the Kantian view that morality was strictly a feature of the human endowment of rational thought. Human moral autonomy, some argued, was threatened by a scientific narrative that allowed for degrees of moral sentiment as these were determined by the relative position of the (not-necessarily-human) subject of the story. Darwin's account of moral development, in other words, could be read as a challenge to the singularity and the indivisibility of human morality and its (Kantian) dependence on reason.

The Anglo-French Catholic biologist St. George Jackson Mivart was one of many prominent commentators who refused Darwin's explanation of moral sensibility as deriving from animal instinct. Reviewing The Descent in the Quarterly Review (July, 1871), Mivart argued that Darwin failed to distinguish between the merely pleasurable (matters of feeling) and the ethically imperative (the difference

between right and wrong: the province of rationality). Darwin's bias toward naturalistic explanations, Mivart complained, led him to the folly of ascribing physical causes to metaphysical phenomena. Feelings of pleasure, Mivart pointed out, are animalistic components of soma, whereas the knowledge of right and wrong is a uniquely human response to the demands of social existence. Thus morality, according to Mivart, signals the presence of a spiritual faculty which is not shared with animals, and the emphasis in Darwin's work on the similarities between people and animals was a misconstrual of our status as God's creatures.

Darwin viewed Mivart's complaints more as a theological intrusion than as a critique of his science--though his private correspondence revealed his respect for Mivart's intellect (Darwin, 1892). Darwin felt that Mivart's criticisms were vitiated by the paradigm of science, that the two men, in one sense, were arguing at cross purposes. Whereas some observers might have seen a conflict between competing perspectives, Darwin saw only the remnants of an outmoded Christian doctrine struggling against the inevitability of its incorporation within--or ultimate repudiation by--scientific materialism. In speaking of the moral sense in developmental terms, Darwin rejected the

absolutist and static conceptions of ethical conduct inherited from Christian theology.

Some eighty years before the Origin, Kant had written that the most important task for understanding the fundamental nature of morality was the discovery and explication of the metaphysical principles that were presupposed by our moral judgments; the role of biology in such a search was non-existent. However, Darwin and his followers found such views unconvincing, rejecting the Kantian claim that moral principles should have an absolutely unconditioned necessity such as we allegedly find in the laws of logic. For evolutionists precisely the opposite held: moral sentiment was an absolutely conditioned contingency resulting from the actions of natural selection. Whereas *mediated* ethical concern had been the tradition concerning animals, a Darwinian account of our historical relation to other creatures was interpreted by some to mean that our ethical duties to animals were *im-mediate*. Hence, *to think of animals historically, meant to think of animals ethically*. As anthropologist Tim Ingold has written:

Given the variability and unpredictability of the similarities and differences between individual human beings and organisms of other species, it follows that if the boundaries of the moral community are defined

sufficiently widely to embrace all human beings and their future descendants, then by the same token they must embrace the non-human animals with which humans share a common ancestry. This at once calls into question even the best-intentioned attempts to validate our moral and political ideals by appeal to a common, species-specific humanity, and has considerable implications with regard to our responsibilities towards non-human animals. (1988: 3)

Ingold points to a further connection between the temporalization of the scale of life, and the question of granting animals a place in the moral community. If ethical duties can be framed as matters of temporal continuity--that is, if future descendants can be conceptualized as members of that moral community--then the possibility that such duties may be carried over to those with whom a common history is shared becomes a potential concern. Such a claim, of course, entails a reconceptualization of community, demanding an extension of the criteria for affiliation (especially in the context of moral association) across temporal boundaries (see Gergen, 1989; Young, 1990; Bauman, 1993, 1995). If animals bring the pre-human past into the present, then humans carry moral responsibility

into the not-yet-human future.<sup>9</sup> By arguing that humans and animals share a common origin, Darwin offered evidence to those who maintained that animals were unfairly excluded from the province of moral relations.

### **The Creed of Kinship**

The success of the Darwinian revolution guaranteed that the animal rights movement would come to theorize moral obligations to animals in the context of biological continuity and similarity, and several Victorian humanitarians were eager to place evolutionary theory at the forefront of their battle against animal cruelty. Howard William's The Ethics of Diet, a Catena of Authorities deprecatory of the habit of Flesh-eating published in 1883, argued that as we profess ourselves to be "the highest of all the gradually ascending and co-ordinated series of living beings," so too are we bound to prove our evolutionary superiority by refraining from practices that would harm the lower beasts. Other writers owed debts to

---

<sup>9</sup> The claim that future generations have a moral claim on living generations has been advanced by several writers. Ronald Green's *Intergenerational Distributive Justice and Environmental Responsibility* (1977) is an important contribution to this discussion. Joel Feinberg's *The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations* (1974) analyzes the issues discussed above in finer detail, suggesting that unborn humans and living animals are both the sorts of beings that qualify for "auxiliary membership" in the moral community.

Darwinism that were more explicitly acknowledged. E. F. Evans, for instance, author of The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals (1906), treated the subject of the social history of animals in his volume Evolutional Ethics and Animal Psychology (1898). Evans argued that evolutionary theory compelled a rethinking of ethical philosophy by drawing from Darwin's oft-cited claim that differences between humans and animals were of degree rather than kind, an argument that was given further treatment in J. Howard Moore's The Universal Kinship (1906).

These texts relied on the dovetailing of two sets of ideas: the historically defined association between moral commitment and family, and the thesis of evolutionary continuity. The main impact such arguments had, then, resulted from a combination of two otherwise antithetical propositions. The first, the view that moral obligation has familial dimensions, could be interpreted generally as an emotional or Romantic argument; the second, the Darwinian perspective on biological kinship, was a scientific or rational claim about evolutionary history. Hence the decades following Darwin's work saw Romantic values combined with scientific research in the articulation of what we now regard as the foundation of the modern animal rights movement.

In order to provide a more detailed explanation of the connection between Darwinian thought and the animal rights movement, it will be valuable to look at the work of one of the most prominent of these early modernist animal activists, Henry Salt. Salt's "Creed of Kinship" fused Darwin with Bentham, and in uniting Darwinism with moral utilitarianism, Salt established the philosophical bedrock upon which the contemporary animal rights movement ever since has been situated. His work was a sustained meditation on the arbitrary nature by which the ethical realm had been divided. He was convinced, he said, that "there is no difference in kind between man and the other animals, nor any warrant in science or ethics for drawing between them, as between 'persons' and 'things,' an absolute line of demarcation" (1892: 134). In this respect, Salt was dedicated to the view that Cartesian attitudes towards animals had largely determined the framework for human-animal relations, and that to shift society's perspective towards a more humanitarian viewpoint, it was necessary to demonstrate that the divisions between culture and nature were arbitrary as well as contrary to scientific reason. Hence Salt, along with many of his Victorian colleagues, found himself arguing somewhat selectively, borrowing from evolutionary biology only those parcels of information that

lent his humanitarian views ammunition, while ignoring the arguments of scientists like Thomas Huxley (1893) who had claimed that "the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it" (in Appleman, 328). Salt had no intention of conceding that ethical precepts could not be derived from science (Huxley's "cosmic process"), arguing instead that it was precisely in the fact that ethics had its grounding in our evolutionary history that made extrapolations of this sort possible.

Such views were revolutionary in their day, and it is hardly surprising to learn, that in addition to being an author Henry Salt was a social reformer and acclaimed activist. Thomas Regan credits Salt with having helped to move the issue of animal rights "past the stage of ridicule to that of discussion" (1983: 400), while Peter Singer acknowledges that his own work, Animal Liberation, is so largely indebted to Salt's writings that his own contributions have "added relatively little to the essential case Salt outlined in 1892" (1980: viii).

At the time the Kellogg brothers were establishing their sanitarium at Battle Creek, Michigan in the United States, and claiming a direct relationship existed between diet and moral proclivities, Salt was developing a

remarkably similar theory concerning food and ethics in Britain. Salt maintained that a completely vegetable diet was the key to both physical and moral health, and he contributed articles on this theme to a number of socialist journals.<sup>10</sup> He argued that the beginning point of all humanitarian attitudes was vegetarianism, writing that "everyone must satisfy himself of the necessity, the real necessity, of the use of flesh-food, before he comes to any intellectual conclusion on the subject of animals' rights" (1892: 65).

Salt's explication of what he actually meant by an animal's right was, to be blunt, frustrating. This omission is explained partly by the fact that Salt presumed that his readers already were informed on the subjects of rights, duties, and obligations, and so he began his explanation taking for granted a shared context of understanding.

Greek and Roman philosophers had presupposed that there were natural rights, or, more properly, a natural justice

---

<sup>10</sup> Salt's claim that socialism and vegetarianism were philosophically and politically inseparable resonates with the work of some contemporary feminists who have claimed that feminist theories that do not include an environmentalist perspective are incomplete as are all forms of environmentalism that leave aside the contributions of feminism (see for e.g., Adams, 1990; Plumwood, 1993; Warren, 1990).

(*jus naturale*).<sup>11</sup> Scholars of jurisprudence in ancient times argued that the existence of these ethical precepts was proven by the historical fact that humans had lived before their organization into a civil order or social code. Once we entered into a social contract, common law came into play (*jus commune*). But these moral precepts did not speak to the question of animals, and so the Romans assumed the existence of the *jus animalium*, the view that animals possessed natural rights independent of human civilization. The *jus animalium* enjoined people to show respect for nature and for animals, though the details of what sorts of behavior constituted respect were highly variable. With the rise of Christianity in the West, the view that animals possessed any form of natural rights was effectively abandoned.

Salt revived the idea of a *jus animalium*, accepting a form of natural rights ethics which, he presumed, needed no elucidation. In one of the few passages where he addressed directly the notion of rights, he said:

If "rights" exist at all--and both feeling and usage indubitably prove that they do exist--they cannot be consistently awarded to men and denied to animals,

---

<sup>11</sup> In actual fact, the word "rights" is used here inappropriately, but it does convey the point I want to make

since the same sense of justice and compassion apply in both cases. (24)

And in this same paragraph, Salt quoted the pamphleteer Humphry Primatt, who wrote

Pain is pain...whether it be inflicted on man or on beast; and the creature that suffers it, whether man or beast, being sensible of the misery of it while it lasts, suffers *evil*; and the sufferance of evil, unmeritedly, unprovokedly, where no offence has been given, and no good can possibly be answered by it, but merely to exhibit power or gratify malice, is Cruelty and Injustice in him that occasions it. (24-25; italics and capitals in original).<sup>12</sup>

---

somewhat more effectively than the word "justice."

<sup>12</sup> In an appendix to the book added in 1895, Salt writes: There is no difference *in kind* between man and other animals, nor any warrant in science or ethics for drawing between them, as between "persons" and "things," an absolute line of demarcation. Compelled to admit that the difference is only one of degree, Mr. Ritchie sought to evade the significance of this fact by arguing that it does not follow that, if men have rights, animals also have rights "in the same sense of the term." I maintain that it *does* so follow. If by the recognition of rights we mean that man, as a sentient and intelligent being, should be exempt from all avoidable suffering, it follows that other beings who are also sentient and intelligent, though in a lower degree, should have, in a lower degree, the same exemption. (134)

This addition, intended to satisfy Ritchie's disagreement with Salt's notion of rights, actually raises at least one difficulty on way to solving the one it was meant to answer.

Salt follows here the view advocated by the English economist and philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), who argued that the only important criterion to consider when trying to determine whether or not a creature warranted moral consideration was whether or not the being in question was capable of suffering. In a passage that has become one of the most frequently quoted in all of the animal rights literature, Bentham wrote:

The day *may* come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a

---

Specifically, it obscures the notion of rights by not only reaffirming Salt's *a priori* judgment concerning the presence of rights in human beings, but it ties those rights to the presence of intelligence, and then scales them according to a hierarchy that treats an animal's claim to rights in relation to its level of intelligence. This argument might make sense in a different context, but it contradicts Salt's ideas about the conditional nature of rights involving equal interests (i.e., the valence of one's rights does not vary, only the force of one's claim in certain conditions). But in speaking of animals as possessing rights in a "lower degree," Salt appears to have put some value on rights according to a scale that measures rights as "higher" or "lower", a view utterly at odds with Darwin's ideas. This position ultimately changes Salt's contextual view of rights, as that is argued throughout his book, into an essentialist view of rights that is inconsistent with his utilitarian perspective.

tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*? (Bentham, 1789; cited in Regan and Singer, 1989: 26)

Following Bentham, Salt advanced the idea that suffering--or rather, the capacity to suffer--is the only reasonable standard we need consider when trying to determine whether an animal is deserving of moral standing. If the being can suffer, then we are obligated to ensure that it does not suffer needlessly, and especially to ensure that we are not the cause of its suffering. Salt's interpretation of Bentham provides an argument against animal cruelty based on the presumption that animals' interests and human beings' interests must somehow be weighed without favoritism. That

is, an animal's interests should count equally to a person's interests. Hence animals have rights in Salt's analysis, because both humans and animals have interests that require respect and consideration. We are similar sorts of beings in that people and animals are presumed to have similar kinds of interests.

Salt also utilized the argument from evolutionary continuity in order to counter traditional religious and scientific objections to animal rights. The conventional religious objection, he said, is the view that animals have no soul. This position not only establishes a hierarchy that places humans over animals in the theological community, but it also implies that animals are not immortal, and that their lives, therefore, are without any moral or religious significance.

The denial of immortality to animals, Salt argued, "tends strongly to lessen their chance of being justly and considerately treated" (12). Put differently, the theological argument stresses human-animal dissimilitude, and defines that difference in metaphysical terms: the presence or absence of a soul. But because Salt emphasized our similarity to other creatures, difference became the basis for rejecting animals' rights. For Salt, then, *difference must be disavowed*. As the soul has no corporeal

substance, there is no evidence either that people possess souls or that animals lack them. What we can observe, Salt argued, are the ways in which people and animals act alike, not the ways in which invisible, spiritual differences are said to separate us. There is little doubt that Salt's agnosticism played a part in his rejection of the animal soul argument.

Salt reduced the scientific objections to animals' rights to the traditional Cartesian position that animals are automata, lacking in consciousness or feeling. He claimed that the Cartesian position merely carries one step further the Christian argument, since Descartes argued that not only do animals lack souls and any claim to life hereafter, but that they have no claim to a life in the present since they are not really living beings--that is, they are only machines. Here again Salt rejected the metaphysical assumption of dissimilitude that underlies the Cartesian doctrine, pointing out that our everyday experiences of people as well as of animals show us a world of beings acting according to states of mind, moods, intentions, and affections. It is the tendency of modern science to pursue reduction as the chief means of understanding that leads to the Cartesian error, he maintained.

It is apparent that Salt ascribed religious and scientific objections to animal rights to the fact that both religious and scientific commentators accede to what we might call the dissimilitude thesis. Both Christianity and Cartesianism, in other words, ignore organic continuities and manifest similarities, and focus instead on various forms of difference and discontinuity. Moreover, the differences that are highlighted by both scientists and theologians are differences that are ultimately invisible and beyond immediate determination. To counter the objections to animal rights raised by either scientists or theists, Salt simply ignored the fact that people and animals are different sorts of beings in a wide variety of respects, and stressed instead the ways in which humans and other species show manifest similarities. Hence Salt claimed that no proof had been offered by either the Christian apologist or the mechanistic-minded scientist that some quality, inherent to animals, disenfranchised them from the moral community. Salt sought to provide a theory for animal moral status based on the dubious thesis that humans and animals did not differ in any substantial way one might consider relevant to moral theory. Given that Henry Salt raised this argument while his menagerie of pets remained silent on the matter, one might be inclined to indicate one

of the central defects of his theory. Animals may deserve moral compassion, but Salt's thesis of similitude was defeated in its articulation.

Salt argued that his conviction concerning the importance of our connection to other animals had taken on the complexion of a religious doctrine. Similitude changed into a creed of unity, and Salt declared himself a follower in the truest sense. In a statement prepared before his death that was read at his funeral service, Salt declared:

Names are very liable to be misunderstood; and when I say that I shall die, as I have lived, a rationalist, socialist, pacifist and humanitarian, I must make my meaning clear. I wholly disbelieve in the present established religion; but I have a very firm religious faith of my own--a Creed of Kinship, I call it--a belief that in years to come there will be a recognition of the brotherhood between man and man, nation and nation, human and subhuman, which will transform a state of semi-savagery, as we have it, into one of civilization, when there will be no such barbarity as warfare, or the robbery of the poor by the rich, or the ill-usage of the lower animals by man.

(229)

There are several important ideas in this passage, but there are two specific points raised here that I want to touch upon.

The first is a point I have made already that deserves reiteration. Salt argued that our connection to animals was a matter of continuity, kinship, and similitude, and he regarded that connection as the foundation point of moral consideration. He also took this foundation to be the basic dogma in a quasi-religious creed he suggested could be founded on this relationship. Though this argument contains nascent pantheistic elements, it is perhaps more correct to see it as the declaration of an extreme dedication, one that passes from normal advocacy and into the realms of obsession. Keith Tester (1991) has argued that animal rights activists have made their commitment to animal welfare into a fetishism. Certainly Salt's advocacy came very close to fetishism. Salt's singular devotion to animal welfare brings him close to abandoning the rational basis that he argued gave moral and even judicial weight to the implicit contract that binds us to nature and to other creatures, for in the end he resorted to a kind of quasi-religious appeal in order to clinch the argument. Salt implored his readers to take the leap of faith, and to become followers of his Creed of Kinship. The animal

question had become for him the nodal point of political philosophy, the central issue upon which other matters were merely piled up as addenda. It is little wonder, then, that he found himself proclaiming his arguments akin to religious doctrine.

These observations lead directly to my second point. Salt tied together his commitment to animal welfare and his dedication to left-wing and liberal causes. In other words, there is little to distinguish between Salt's views on animals' rights and his interests in ameliorating the suffering of society's impoverished; each is part of an ethical agenda predicated on similarity, a politics of identity that finds moral status in sameness. "The idea of Humanity is no longer confined to man; it is beginning to extend itself to the lower animals, as in the past it has been gradually extended to savages and slaves," he wrote (112). We must "reconcile brain to heart" in order to overcome one of the more dangerous legacies of modern science, namely "the spiritualistic isolation of man from Nature" (114, 113). Only in that unity, that celebration of similarity as a secular creed, is a rational and comprehensive morality achievable. Henry Salt thus transformed the atheistic implications of Darwinism into a

religious creed whose main form of ritual observance was kindness to the animal Other.

### **Evolution and Moral Sympathy**

Darwin's position on the extension of moral compassion to non-human animals was far more ambiguous than Salt's. Indeed, throughout his life Darwin struggled with the question of animals' moral condition, the struggle raging within him exemplifying the split between humanitarian values and scientific progress. In an 1871 letter to Dr. Lankester, Darwin stated that although he supported vivisection "for real investigations of physiology," he found it impossible to justify experiments on animals "for mere damnable and detestable curiosity." How the distinction between "real investigation" and "mere curiosity" was to be drawn was unclear, and, in any event, Darwin was reticent even to consider the matter, commenting in his letter to Lankester that experimentation on animals "is a subject which makes me sick with horror, so I will not say another word about it, else I shall not sleep tonight" (Darwin, 1892: 304).<sup>13</sup> The continuity thesis was an

---

<sup>13</sup> Darwin's sympathetic concern for animals was well known to his friends and neighbors, and virtually every biography touches on this aspect of his personality (Irvine, 1955; Easley, 1946, 1958; Brent, 1981). His family's plan that he should follow his father's lead and pursue a medical career

essential aspect of Darwin's argument that the moral sense in humans, and the impetus for sociality among animals, were directly connected. But as a scientist, his own ethical thinking was often circumscribed by extrinsic, social factors.

The vivisection question was one of the few political debates into which Darwin found himself publicly drawn.<sup>14</sup>

It was a theoretically difficult problem for Darwin, who was

---

ended abruptly when Darwin left medical school unable to withstand the dissection of cadavers or the practices of the operating theater. This sensitivity to the pain and suffering of others (including animals) never left him. Francis Darwin tells of his father's efforts to prevent the mistreatment of "dancing dogs" and draught horses, recounting how on one occasion his father returned from his walk "pale and faint from having seen a horse ill-used, and from the agitation of violently remonstrating with the man" (1892: 304). A similar story is told of Nietzsche, who purportedly collapsed in the streets of Turin upon seeing a horse being flogged (Caputo, 1993: 23).

<sup>14</sup> Frances Power Cobbe, a leading anti-vivisectionist of the period, publicly derided Darwin's views as these were expressed during his appearances before Parliamentary Committees considering anti-cruelty legislation, and in his letters to the Times, all of which caused Darwin considerable unease. Cobbe's feminism, combined with her tireless work on behalf of animals, made her a formidable symbol of radical politics, and Darwin's inherent shyness made the public confrontation with Cobbe especially distressing. Indeed, it has been suggested that Darwin only entered the battle concerning vivisection at the urging of his colleagues (Thomas Huxley in particular), who recognized that Darwin's soft-spoken and reserved nature might blunt the shrillness of the vivisection debate, and turn the tide of public opinion in the scientists' favor (Ryder, 1989: 158ff). Such an interpretation suggests that sympathetic concern for animals, which had become associated with feminist activism, was regarded by leading scientists of the period as an irrational campaign against enlightenment.

compelled to admit that the theory of evolution could be used to support animal experimentation just as it could be used to condemn the practice. In the first instance, evolutionary theory argued that the physiological similarities between people and animals made the knowledge derived from vivisection important in the modern reforms taking place in Victorian medicine ( French, 1975; Nuland, 1988). On the other hand, evolutionary continuity also could be read as a statement of our moral responsibilities towards the animal Others with whom we shared the planet and a common history of descent. Darwin's own work provided the epistemic foundation for what he found emotionally distressing.<sup>15</sup>

There was no easy escape. In an 1881 letter to the Times, Darwin sought to explain how his opposition to cruelty to animals could be reconciled with his support of a Parliamentary Bill which would enable animal experimenters to pursue their scientific research. Whereas he had been

---

<sup>15</sup> As Armitt wrote in 1885:

It is, indeed, the scientists themselves who have proved to us the close relationship existing between man and animals, and their probable development from the same origin. It is they who instruct us to cast aside the old theology which makes men differ from the beasts of the field, inasmuch as he was created in 'the image of God', and yet would arbitrarily keep, for their own convenience, the line of division which such a belief marked out between man and animals. (Cited in Ryder, 1989: 163)

throughout his life "a strong advocate for humanity to animals," he wrote, he was equally convinced that "physiology cannot possibly progress except by means of experiments on living animals." Moreover, he suggested that he felt "the deepest conviction that he who retards the progress of physiology commits a crime against mankind" (Darwin, 1892: 306). Darwin's ethical practices evince some of the expediency found in Descartes's provisory code of morality. It also showed how his commitment to ethical precepts enabled him to alienate himself from his moral inclinations.

For Darwin, the unfettered pursuit of scientific truth was ethically ordained. In this respect, Darwin's views on science and progress were not different from those of the majority of his Victorian colleagues. His uncritical acceptance of the putative ties between social progress and scientific research was common among the upper-class men of his society (Sperling, 1988). Although his personal abhorrence at the thought of cruelty to animals is often cited in contemporary animal rights literature, his willingness to restrain his emotional repulsion in favor of reason is less often described (see esp. Rollin, 1989).

Darwin's sympathetic attitude towards animals was explained by evolutionary theory and the description he

provided of the development of the social instincts. In the Descent Darwin offered abundant evidence of the similarities between people and animals (principally apes and other mammals) and claimed that there were virtually no forms of human social or cultural life that were not prefigured in the animal kingdom. The Descent was given over to pages of anecdotal evidence in support of this claim as Darwin entertained his readers with accounts of animals displaying, in varying degrees of development: emotions, curiosity, imitation, attention, memory, imagination, reason, abstraction, and language. Darwin claimed that animals possess a sense of beauty in addition to an incipient morality.

Indeed, Darwin reserved a particular place in his theories for morality, claiming that of all of the ways in which humans and animals might be distinguished, "the moral sense or conscience is by far the most important." Morality, he averred, "is summed up in that short but imperious word *ought*, so full of high significance. It is the most noble of all the attributes of man" (1871: 471). Yet however noble our moral sense might be, Darwin was equally convinced that its origin differed in no substantial respects from that of the appendix or the coccyx. Though

reason has assisted in ensuring that the conscience is our "supreme judge and monitor," Darwin insisted that

the first foundation or origin of the moral sense lies in the social instincts, including sympathy; and these instincts no doubt were primarily gained, as in the case of the lower animals, through natural selection.

(1871: 914)

Darwin's views were instrumental in the subsequent development of naturalistic philosophies of ethics. Evolutionary theory, taken as a particular instance of naturalism, conceptualizes consciousness, agency, and moral sentiment as the products of physical causes. Yet as later philosophers would argue, the philosophy of naturalism presents the Western world with an intellectual crisis in the apparent demise of rational certainty. If human consciousness is merely material, an aspect of physical nature, then it can never become a foundation for rational certainty, for it is simply a consequence of random circumstances, a product of cosmic indeterminacy. Similarly, there would be no prospect of certain moral knowledge, or, at least, no foundation on which to anchor a rational moral code. Certitude required metaphysical transcendence; Darwinism insisted on material immanence. Hence evolutionary continuity might account for the origins

of a moral sense in our connection to animal being, but in so doing it also signaled the demise of moral certitude.<sup>16</sup>

Darwin was untroubled by this possibility, and in the Descent suggested that the contingent character of the moral sense not only gave weight to arguments for ethical relativism, but explained morality as an adventitious condition of our mammalian ontology. In what must be regarded as a radical and provocative claim, he wrote:

In the same manner as various animals have some sense of beauty, though they admire widely different objects, so they might have a sense of right and wrong, though led by it to follow widely different lines of conduct. If, for instance, to take an extreme case, men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters and no one would think of interfering. (1871: 473)<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Kohák (1984) provides an excellent account on the West's understanding of naturalism in this context.

<sup>17</sup> Darwin's example will no doubt strike many as more fiction than science (Kafka's Gregor Samsa springs to mind). However, the view that our moral sense is constituted along the lines of our mammalian essence has been adopted recently by several contributors to the discipline of sociobiology (see esp. Ruse, 1986; Ruse and Wilson, 1986). Nonetheless, the example Darwin gives of a species-specific character to

Darwin temporalized ethics and insisted on its species-specific character. Hence he swept away all remnants of a

---

human morality is problematic on grounds one might expect Darwin himself to have recognized. In the first instance, it is difficult to understand how Darwin could imagine that humans could behave in any way like *hymenoptera* and still retain other mammalian traits. Darwin was especially wary of those who overlooked the intricate web of coevolutionary processes by which species were developmentally shaped. His example in this passage is therefore uncharacteristic, and deviates widely from his ordinary sensitivity to ecological context. Second, the notion of sociality among insects is really a misnomer, for insects like those of the order *hymenoptera*, respond to fixed genetic dispositions commonly called closed programs, and thus do not express themselves as social, asocial, or antisocial beings at all (Midgley, 1978). The purported sociality of insects is hardly different than the communion that occurs between bacteria and other microscopic organisms.

Finally, the example Darwin uses here is actually at odds with the position he takes in the Origin, where he suggests that termite colonies and bee hives must be viewed as single organisms if we are to understand how natural selection acts upon them given the presence in these societies of sterile, non-reproducing individuals. Hence the sociality of the *hymenoptera* is really an explanatory artifact, a conclusion Darwin had already come to more than a decade before the above passage was composed.

Having said this, there may still be grounds for asking whether or not some of the essentials of our species nature might not influence the quality and form of our moral sense. One way in which Darwin's argument might be strengthened modestly, is to consider Carol Gilligan's (1982) research into the differently constituted views of morality of men and women. Gilligan argues that women's definitions of appropriate moral behavior are more relational than men's which tend in their turn to be more individualistic. This could be read as an instance of patriarchal thinking having influenced Darwin's science. Alternatively, one might conclude that morality has a sex-specific (or, more correctly, gender-specific) character. How far one could advance this argument to the frontiers of the species border, however, is an open question. (See also Shotter, 1993).

certain foundation for moral conduct in the realm of the transcendental, and sought out an immanent grounding for morality in the history of prehuman being. This history, Darwin said, could be ascertained by a careful reading of the nature of the social relations among members of "savage tribes" and by examining the quality of sympathy and affection observed in animals. The key element, he argued, was that of similarity, or community. Our prehuman progenitors would have judged behaviors as good or bad "solely as they affect the welfare of the tribe." In addition,

this conclusion agrees well with the belief that the so-called moral sense is aboriginally derived from the social instincts, for both relate at first exclusively to the community. (1871: 489)

The exclusive bonds that sustain a community (an under-theorized idea in Darwin's work) are simultaneously the structure and the expression of moral sympathy. A community, in other words, is a social formation in which the moral sense first appears, yet the moral sense is already present in the fact of the community's existence. This apparent tautology did not prevent Darwin from arguing that even as our moral sense was initially an experience of parental and filial affection, it was to be sharply

distinguished from the so-called lower moral rules founded on selfish motives. As Darwin put it:

The higher [moral rules] are founded on the social instincts, and relate to the welfare of others. They are supported by the approbation of our fellow-men and by reason. The lower rules, though some of them when implying self-sacrifice hardly deserve to be called lower, relate chiefly to self, and arise from public opinion, matured by experience and cultivation; for they are not practiced by rude tribes. (1871: 491)

That Darwin saw the self-serving impulse as a "lower" form of behavior, and the self-sacrificing act as a "higher" expression of the moral sense, is a crucial feature of his overall perspective on the evolution of morality from the social instincts. Darwin posits moral development as an imaginary series of concentric rings around the individual, each ring containing within it a number of significant others towards whom the individual feels the compulsion of moral obligation. The nearest ring contains only the members of the individual's immediate family, and is marked as the domain of parental and filial affection. The next ring contains a broader grouping, members of the extended family perhaps, neighbors, and so on. With the expansion of these rings away from the individual, and the increasing

inclusiveness of each successive circle, we can trace a movement away from the parental/filial affections and the primacy of self-interest, toward a form of sympathetic attachment with others who constitute the individual's community. In Darwinism, moral evolution is a moving away from self to other, from self as *ipse* and *idem* (Ricoeur, 1992), to other as *heteromorphic* and *heteronomic* (Caputo, 1993). Hence Darwin's scheme of moral development is a claim about *the progressive incorporation of the increasingly other Other into the individual's moral lifeworld*. In Darwin's words:

As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. The point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races. If, indeed, such men are separated from him by great differences in appearance or habits, experience unfortunately shews us how long it is, before we look at them as our fellow-creatures. Sympathy beyond the confines of man, that is, humanity to the lower animals, seems to be one of the latest

moral acquisitions.... This virtue, one of the noblest with which man is endowed, seems to arise incidentally from our sympathies becoming more tender and more widely diffused, until they are extended to all sentient beings. As soon as this virtue is honoured and practiced by some few men, it spreads through instruction and example to the young, and eventually becomes incorporated in public opinion. (1871: 491-2)

For Darwin the apex of moral evolution was the extension of moral sensibility beyond the circumference of the species border (though as I have noted above, this view was not maintained consistently in light of Darwin's support of vivisection). Moral sensibility *improves*, he argues, in respect of its movement away from strictly self-serving, utilitarian interests in pursuit of the acceptance of the heteronomic, intrinsically-valued Other.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> There are certainly utilitarian aspects to Darwinism, as several historians have pointed out (e.g., Bowler, 1984). However, it was Darwin's view that his theories differed significantly from the tents of utilitarianism. In the Descent he acknowledges the importance of the utilitarian position, but rejects it for two reasons.

First, he points out that Mill's account of utilitarianism requires that moral feelings be acquired during an individual's life rather than inherited. Evolution, of course, holds precisely the opposite view. "The ignoring of all transmitted mental qualities," Darwin remarks, "will...be hereafter judged as a most serious blemish in the works of Mr. Mill" (1871: 472). Second, Darwin points out that although "the greatest happiness principle" effectively counters the erroneous views of

The recursiveness of this movement is striking. Even as the moral sense first appears in the social instincts of (prehuman) animals, its evolutionary journey returns it to animal being. The naturalistic inclinations of Darwinism are made apparent in the moral (and intellectual) ascension described by our return to nature. *Sympathy for others is thus both the source of our moral sense, and simultaneously the goal of our moral progress.* Moreover, in Darwin's account of the development of the social instincts, moral perfection, as he refers to it, is brought about by our overcoming different configurations of difference--what Nietzsche would refer to as the *pathos of distance*. This view stands in stark contrast to the Cartesian position

---

philosophers who locate the source of moral compassion in selfishness, it is incorrect to establish that principle as the source of our moral feelings. Whereas the greatest happiness of the members of a community might be the standard for weighing our moral conduct, it cannot also be the motive for our behavior. Even here, though, Darwin is reluctant to place too high a value on happiness without supplying a contextual grounding. Hence he suggests that it is more correct to speak of the social instincts as having developed "for the general good rather for the general happiness of the species" (1871: 490). Supererogatory acts, for instance, may be accompanied by no pleasurable feelings at all; they may, however, be impelled by the sympathetic ties formed from the social instincts. Although pleasure (or happiness) may be associated with the heroic act after it has been carried out, its absence at the moment the act is performed suggested to Darwin that pleasure cannot thereby be the motive for undertaking such a course of behavior.

where the absolute otherness of animal being is said to make sympathy for animals impossible. By contrast, this reading of Darwinism suggests that it is possible to find in the absolute alterity of the animal Other a reason for its inclusion in the moral community. As man [sic] advances in intellectual power, Darwin wrote, and as his

sympathies become more tender and widely diffused, extending to men of all races, to the imbecile, maimed, and other useless members of society, and finally to the lower animals,--so would the standard of his morality rise higher and higher. (1871: 493)

The ennoblement of moral sensibility, then, is its emancipation from the restraint of species membership. "The moral order," as Kohak puts it, "is...the vital order seen from the vantage point of freedom" (1984: 71). In Darwinian theory, the ontological conditions of our animal being are the conditions of moral possibility. Moreover, there is something nearly pre-ontological, or pre-original in the way that Darwin derives moral sympathy from an immemorial past beyond human civilization. The evolution of the moral sense arises from, and returns to, the primacy of animal being in self and in other.

## **Time and the Darwinian Conscience**

According to Darwin, the moral sense of nature is transformed into the moral condition of our human being via temporalization; one's conscience is produced by the past's visitation in the present. "A moral being is one who is capable of comparing his past and future actions or motives," writes Darwin, "and of approving or disapproving of them" (1871: 482-83). "Man, from the activity of his mental faculties, cannot avoid reflection: past impressions and images are incessantly and clearly passing through his mind" (1871: 483). Whatever we ought to do at this moment is determined in some respect by what we have done, might have done, or wished we had done. There is a comparative dynamic to the structure of the conscience that clearly mirrors Darwin's larger project in the determinative influence of the (animal) past on the activities of the (human) present.

In temporalizing the conscience, Darwin accords reason an important role in the cultural refinement of the moral sense. Animals may possess a nascent kind of conscience in the form of the social instincts, but conscience *per se* is strictly a human trait. The possession of reason, as Darwin views it, places us in the world of time, and it is only in

time that morality can have any ontological grounding.<sup>19</sup> A human being, he asserts, "cannot avoid looking both backwards and forwards, and comparing past impressions" (1871: 913). Reason enables us to assess our conduct from the standpoint of our situation as temporally attuned beings, and to determine if one of our enduring moral instincts (filial affection, for instance) has been temporarily mastered by one of our more fleeting but overpowering instincts (greed, for instance). In such circumstances, Darwin says, the overpowering impulse, in being satisfied, leaves behind a memory trace of dissatisfaction in the form of an unfulfilled impulse for community affiliation. Clearly there are early anticipations of Freudian theory here.

What is most important in this formulation, however, is that Darwin centers his conception of moral sensibility in what I would suggest is an illustration of the condition of

---

<sup>19</sup> The a-temporal lifeworld of animals is neatly captured in Edwin Muir's (1887-1959) poem, *The Animals*:

They do not live in the world,/Are not in time and  
space./From birth to death hurled/No word do they have,  
not one/To plant a foot upon,/Were never in any  
place/....have never trod/Twice the familiar  
track/Never never turned back/Into the memoried  
day./All is new and near/In the unchanging Here.

Whether time is perceived or understood by animals in a way analogous to human conceptions is a difficult and much debated topic. Discussions can be found in Griffin, 1984 and Walker, 1983.

*being-for* the Other. In the Descent he argues that morality is prefigured in the before-human Other, and that sympathy, the "foundation-stone" of the social instincts, brings the need for the Other--and the need for attentiveness to the Other's welfare--into the individual's somatic experience (1871: 472). Cartesian subjectivism is at odds with the Darwinian thesis which claims that our sense of sympathetic concern for the plight of others is an essential aspect of our self-understanding, an understanding that is grounded in the ontological conditions of our animal being. "We are...impelled to relieve the sufferings of another," writes Darwin, "in order that our own painful feelings may be at the same time relieved" (1871: 478). The emphasis Darwin places here on a kind of relationship model of sympathetic connection would seem to be an important consideration for understanding the way in which our human nature appears. Becoming human, Darwin seems to suggest, is related directly to the development of those qualities of compassion and sympathy by which the interests of the Other become incorporated in our conception of selfhood. Darwin's emphasis on the primacy of sympathy, and his subsequent identification of social organization with the capacity for sympathetic connection, suggests that he sees social relations and moral relations developing together.

The place of the moral self in the process of self-constitution is, of course, an important theme in the works of Levinas. As Bauman writes:

Awakening to being for the Other is the awakening of the self, which is the *birth* of the self. There is no other awakening, no other way of finding out myself as the *unique* I, the one and only I, the I different from all others, the *irreplaceable* I, not a specimen of a category. (1993: 77).

Being for the Other is an act of self-constitution in which a moral dialogue ensues. "I am moral *before* I think," Bauman asserts (1993: 61). In this respect I would suggest that Darwin's efforts to posit a naturalistic basis for human morality shows that our moral sense originates not in the decisively rational aspect of human being, but in the animal being that is the foundation of our sympathetic concern for the Other. Darwin's views on this account represent an incorporation of morality in the most fundamental (and primitive) impulse of our response to, and responsibility for, the Other. Darwin does not overlook that our moral sense is constrained initially by the allure of sameness; that is, our moral considerations move outward from a original center of limited, immediate concern for kin. Nor does he reduce conscience and other socially

derived forms of ethical convention to the social instincts. But he does posit that morality is nourished on its capacity to embrace differences of all kinds--heteromorphic and heteronomic differences alike. Hence I would suggest that the Darwinian model of moral development resonates with many of the ideas proposed by Levinas.

However, it is not my intention to "naturalize" Levinas's views and claim for him a direct line of philosophical descent from Darwinian theories of moral sympathy. But in Darwin's account of the evolution of moral sentiment there is something curiously similar to Levinas's depiction of the moral relation of the one-for-the-other. Like Levinas, Darwin founds the domain of social rules and duties on the moral engagement of the filial affections, a kind of moral dyad in which concern for the other's welfare plays a decisive role. Admittedly, Darwin is here thinking in rather patriarchal terms of maternal affections as these were developed from instinctual impulses. Nonetheless, the very notion that a kind of pre-human Other could be capable of the rudimentary sense of responsibility Darwin describes suggests that our belonging-ness to the animal Other may be closer than Levinas has admitted.

Indeed, as I have pointed out earlier Levinas himself is ambivalent on the question of Darwin's contributions to

our understanding of moral obligation, suggesting that Darwin's primary interest in the "struggle for life" is fundamentally opposed to his (Levinas's) philosophical project. In one of the few places where he discusses Darwin's work directly, Levinas says:

I do not know at what moment the human appears, but what I want to emphasize is that the human breaks with pure being, which is always a persistence in being. This is my principal thesis. A being is something that is attached to being, to its own being. That is Darwin's idea. The being of animals is a struggle for life. A struggle without ethics. It is a question of might.... That's Darwin's idea: the living being struggles for life. The aim of being is being itself. However, with the appearance of the human--and this is my entire philosophy--there is something more important than my life, and that is the life of the other.... I believe that it is in saintliness that the human begins. (Wright et. al., 1988: 172)

Levinas's comments are not an entirely accurate representation of Darwin's views, as we have just seen. In the first instance, Darwin, like Levinas, does not know at what precise moment the human appears, and never made any claim to the contrary. But this is more incidental than

crucial to his analysis of the evolution of the moral sense. Darwin's analysis of the emergence of morality is more sophisticated than Levinas allows, and suggests, much as Levinas argues, that it is in the pre-human, pre-ontological realm that human moral selfhood first appears. Moreover, the "struggle without ethics" speaks only to the condition of animal ontology; it does not address the issue of human responsibility toward nonhuman Others. The important question would seem to have less to do with the being of animals, than with the being of humans. What sorts of obligations might we have to animals?

First philosophy, as Levinas has said, is an ethics; ethics (or morality) comes before ontology (Levinas, 1985: 77). To transcend being, to rise above ontology is to witness the birth of the moral self. Echoing these views, Bauman writes that "once identified with the realm of being-for, the realm of morality is enclosed in the frame of sympathy, of the willingness to serve, to do good, to self-sacrifice for the sake of the Other" (1995: 60). In Lingis's view, "the figure of maternity is an authentic figure of responsibility" (1981: xiii).

Darwin's emphasis on the centrality of sympathy is remarkably similar. In the Darwinian perspective, the individual's sympathetic attachment to the Other gives form

to the co-evolutionary processes by which society develops. Social organization, in the Darwinian account, I would suggest, is a manifestation of the ideal of the moral commune in which responsibility without reciprocity shapes the structure of individual relations. Darwin, of course, makes no such specific claim. However, the involuntarism of the social instincts from which he claims our moral sense comes, would naturally rule against any kind of reciprocal contractarianism being an underlying feature of our apparent impulse to be for the other. It is the very instinctual nature of our move toward sociality, in other words, that makes Darwin's account resonate with certain aspects of Levinas's view of moral thought.

The (pre)human being takes up the call of the Other by answering the authority of the Other's face. Darwin claims that the moral sense is initially conditioned by a sympathetic bond of selflessness and responsibility. In this respect, and given his insistence that this is a pre-human condition (i.e., it is not yet conditioned by awareness of a temporal dimension in which the conscience can appear), it seems evident that the face-to-face encounter of the pre-human being and the Other recommends itself as a nascent moral encounter. More to the point, if we are to follow the evolutionary trajectory of pre-human to

human being, it can be argued further that the face of the animal Other continues to carry the authority of a moral imperative.

This claim would appear to be somewhat at odds with Levinas's position, though. As Peperzak writes:

When Levinas meditates on the significance of the face, he does not describe the complex figure that could be portrayed by a picture or painting; rather, he tries to make us "experience" or "realize" what we see, feel, "know" when another, by looking at me, "touches" me....Neither is it relevant *who* speaks to me; any other is the revelation of *the* Other, and peculiar features deserving special attention would only lead me away from the "absolute otherness" that is at stake. In order to concentrate on the other's otherness, Levinas often stresses the *nakedness* of the other's face: if I am touched, if I am conscious of being concerned, it is not because of the other's beauty, talents, performances, roles, or functions, but only by the other's (human) otherness. (1993: 20)

The parenthetical 'human' is a curious addition to this definition of the face, given that without this insertion there is nothing in these words that would appear to limit the obligation of moral responsibility to humans. And

certainly not all of Levinas's interpreters are in agreement with his view that moral obligations are owed only to humans. Caputo, for instance asserts that

the notion of "others" must be spread out and disseminated, so as to include not only other human beings but what is other than human--animals, e.g., or other living things generally, and even the earth itself. (1993: 5)

Furthermore, as John Llewelyn has said:

When asked about our responsibilities toward nonhuman sentient creatures, [Levinas] is inclined to reply that our thinking about them may have to be only analogical or that the answer turns on whether in the eyes of the animal we can discern a recognition, however obscure, of his own mortality--on whether, in Levinas's sense of the word, the animal has a face. If this question is crucial, we may have to be satisfied with falling back on the need to appeal to spokesmen to speak on the animal's behalf, on analogy with what we do in the case of infants. However, the agent who speaks for the child says what he says on the child's behalf on the basis of something about which no one has any doubt: that the child does not enjoy being battered or starved. Is not the fact that this is also how it is

with nonhuman animals enough to prove that I have a responsibility for them? (Llewelyn, 1991: 240).

It is the nature of the Other to compel responsibility, and in the animal Other, Llewelyn argues, this authority cannot easily be denied. In the originary relations of the parental and filial affections, and in the (pre)human social instincts out of which the conscience is constituted--in the depths of the somatic regions of our animal being--the moral order is born of commitment and relation. In beginning his quest for the evolution of moral sensibility in the compulsion to be for the Other, to be committed to self-sacrifice and sympathy before one's own interests, Darwin broke decisively with the subjectivist implications of Cartesian thought, and posited a view of moral life embedded in the embodied contingency of animal being. The ambivalence of his subsequent attitudes towards animals should not be used against him, for it is in the nature of the moral condition to face the world pinioned by the constraints of numerous competing and often contradictory obligations. A non-ambivalent morality, as Bauman says, is an oxymoron (1993: 10).

The principal lesson of Darwin's work for contemporary animal rights philosophers, I would propose, is his insistence on the importance of sympathetic concern for the

needs of the animal Other, a concern which first appears in the social instincts. The value of this model is that it refuses the primacy of heteronomically guided systems of ethics in favor of autonomously initiated feelings of moral obligation. It suggests that our feelings of responsibility supersede our knowledge of those responsibilities, that responsibilities and obligations are matters of sentiment and emotion, and that the intimation of compulsion which makes obligations intelligible is a somatic/emotional feature of our being.

As John Caputo writes, obligation happens. This is not a challenge to our autonomy, but one of the defining features of personhood. Obligation, Caputo says, "is a feeling, the feeling of being bound" (1993: 7). But the source of obligation he says, is a mystery.<sup>20</sup> He writes:

*Es gibt*: there is obligation (Heidegger). *Il arrive*: it happens (Lyotard). Obligation is a fact, as it were (Kant). Here I am (*me voici*), on the receiving end of an obligation (Levinas). (6-7)

---

<sup>20</sup> "I know nothing about the 'Origin of Obligation,'" Caputo says. "If you press me for an answer on the matter I will develop a serious cough and ask to be excused. I know that I am under an obligation, that the call is received, that I am laid claim to. The rest is silence--or coughing" (1993: 85).

The spontaneous appearance of obligation--one's capture by obligation unawares--renders its reduction to rational analysis highly problematic. Once again, as Caputo has put it:

Obligation is not a rational utterance (*logos*) received on the other end as wholly intelligible and hence as worthy of being obeyed.... Obligation is not like a man talking to himself and offering himself counsel, which he judges to be the best advice he can get; it is instead a shock to the I, to my freedom and autonomy. Obligation is not an exchange transacted in the *mundus intelligibilis* but a bell sounding in the *mundus sensibilis*. It is not the outcome of a dialogue, an exchange of *logoi* occurring on a level surface. It is more like a pathos that I feel, like a felt shock or a blow that strikes me down. It comes to me from without, in a curved space which lays me low, producing a kind of disequilibrium in me. (27)

To begin with obligation is to begin with sympathetic concern; it is to begin with the impulse toward sociality described by Darwin. Contemporary animal activists have largely ignored this feature of Darwin's work, focusing instead on his analysis of evolutionary continuity in order to forge an animal ethics from a human-centered model. But

Darwin's concern with the way in which moral sensibility derives from our animal heritage suggests that it is not in the rational world of ethical systems that responsibility and obligation are to be found, but in the realm of feeling, compassion, and affectionate concern as these are described by Levinas, Bauman, and Caputo. Animal being, Jonas suggests is "essentially passionate being" (Jonas, 1966: 106). An animal ethics should not repudiate sentiment, as Singer and Regan are wont to do, but should recognize that sympathy is the very reason for even considering the extension of moral concern to animals.

Darwin's views on morality and the evolution of the moral sense are important in the context of this project chiefly because it was the theory of evolutionary continuity that established the bedrock on which the animal rights movement came to be founded. But I have gone somewhat beyond this observation to further suggest that in a closer reading of Darwin's ideas about morality one can discover aspects to his theories that resonate, rather than anticipate, the arguments of Levinas. In particular, Darwin's insistence on the temporal dimension of the conscience is a remarkably modern and insightful notion, as are his ideas concerning what might be called the originary aspects of filial sympathies in establishing the general

outlines of human moral conduct. I would not want to push this analysis comparing Darwin and Levinas much further, mindful as I am of the obvious difficulties in mapping the biological onto the philosophical--or vice versa. But in showing these continuities I hope I have at least made evident that Levinas's dismissal of the relevance of Darwinism in the context of his own work may be overly hasty. As with many prominent thinkers, Darwin has often been victimized by his interpreters. In Darwin's case, one often finds that his views are rejected outright (especially by philosophers) on the basis that any biological argument will be construed as a form of genetic determinism. In fact, his work is much more subtle than is commonly thought, and in the area under discussion here I believe his work can be seen as at least modestly supportive of Levinas's position.

But it is important to push this line of thinking a bit further if the idea of animals' moral status is to be shown as decisively prefigured in Levinas's thinking. To this end I will next turn to a consideration of the work of Adolf Portmann, a zoologist whose reflections on animal being show an even greater philosophical orientation than Darwin's. In Portmann's work the idea of animals as subjects figures prominently, and in that regard the connection to Levinas's

ideas about moral relations and face can be made even more strongly. In particular, I want to show that although Levinas has resisted most forms of biological explanation, indicating that the mystery of the human is that which breaks with "pure being," there is yet some aspect to our relations with animals that might also resist the codifying strategies of taxonomy and ethics. Animals may not merely be instances of the Third party, but moral Others as well.

**CHAPTER FIVE:  
CENTRICITY AND DISPLAY:  
ADOLF PORTMANN AND ANIMAL SUBJECTIVITY**

Science has a useful set of insights and they depend on the rigorous adherence to fact and inferential reasoning. It has a certain power. It also has a certain narrowness because it cannot illuminate the larger question of beginning, end, and purpose.

- Robert Jastrow

If I watch a foreign play of which I cannot understand a single word, I do not claim that no play is being performed, or that what I see are random gestures.

- Adolf Portmann

While human sciences with a monistic bent tend to overemphasize the similarities and to ignore the differences between human and non-human beings, those with a dualistic perspective continue, often without much reflection and in an undeclared way, an age-old tradition which suggests an absolute divide between nature and non-nature straddled by human beings.

- Norbert Elias

<p>GLOBE AND MAIL--Veterinarians in Oregon find they are treating more and more pets for obesity, says The Associated Press, and research has shown a correlation between overweight pets and owners. "This is probably one of the hottest topics right now in veterinary nutrition and research," says Robert Van Saun of Oregon State University. Vets are recommending improved diet and more exercise for both parties. October 12, 1994</p>
--

### **The Mystery of Hidden Being**

One of the central ideas Darwin offered in his work on human evolution was, as we have noted, the immanence of moral capacity in the pre-discursive, not-yet-human being, and the subsequent development of the moral sense into the human conscience following a progressive outward movement from a core of self-interest to a world of Otherness. Temporalization played a key role in this analysis, as it was in the context of a sense of temporal continuity that

the conscience assumed its preeminent role. Being situated in time, in other words, was a crucial point in the trajectory from self-absorption to guilt.

In this trajectory one of the guiding themes is that of a world "openness" that is prefigured in the not-yet-human being, a theme that can be found in the work of a number of post-Darwinian writers but which was only provisionally developed in Darwin's own work. Openness to the world makes possible the transformation of the moral sense into an impulse for sociality, a fact that suggests the central role of alterity in the task of world-making (Goodman, 1960). Hence the social instincts, and their intentional focus on the Other, provide an important starting point for the evolution of the human conscience. The structure of morality, on this account, could be read as the interpenetration of alterity in the lifeworld of the individual.

I have also suggested in my analysis of Darwin's views on moral evolution that the pinnacle of moral development is its assumption of respect for animal being, that Darwin sees our moral natures defined hierarchically by the capacity to embrace that alterity which, curiously, is the starting point of the evolutionary journey. Darwin's argument that moral regard for animals is indicative of a higher form of

moral conscience suggests a number of things, including the idea that in animal being there is an *addressive* capacity by which the animal is oriented or attuned to the human Other.<sup>1</sup> To put that more directly, we might say that if animals are able to influence our moral sympathies, then there must be some kind of affective impulse by which we are drawn to their welfare. Much as Levinas discusses the face as an authority by which responsibility is commanded, so too the addressive aspect of the animal is an orientation to the Other which has the authority to compel some form of response. The self-expressive aspect of life, its showing of itself in form and color, for instance, is the addressive element of animal life. Responding to this address, I suggest, prefigures the sort of moral engagement or emotional connection Levinas discusses.

Or, to borrow from Danish philosopher Knud Løgstrup (1971), there is an unspoken demand in all communication that has a moral component such that conversation is

---

<sup>1</sup> The term "addressive" is found in Portmann's work when he refers to addressed phenomena (1964: 71). The key idea for Portmann on this point is that certain external, symmetrical structures are "directed at the eye of a possible beholder" (1964: 69). Thus Portmann argues that our understanding of animal form is inadequate if it fails to consider the way in which animals have what might be considered an interpellative aspect, or, as I have stated here, an addressive dimension. This idea resonates with Levinas's philosophy of language insofar as it suggests a vocative quality.

transformed into moral engagement. This demand, which is carried in language but is not itself reducible to language, mirrors Levinas's conception of the face of the other. It may also be applied in the context of the animal Other's addressive power. Morality may begin, then, in the unspoken, pre-linguistic regions of emotional attunement to the Other.

In order to consider more fully Darwin's analysis of how the moral sense proceeds, it is important to examine the structure of this addressive aspect of animal being. I propose to do this by looking at the work of Adolf Portmann, a Swiss zoologist whose research has focused on the study of animals as "centers of purposeful activity" and as biological subjects whose internality actively transforms (objective) place into (subjective) space (Pappe, 1967: 163).

Portmann's main contribution to the study of animals, I would say, is his continual emphasis on the subjective experience of being, including animal being. Indeed, the systematic study of animal subjectivity constitutes what he calls a "purely biological methodology." Biology, Portmann argues, cannot be reduced to a set of explanations whose truth is confirmed only when weighed against the findings in other sciences. Such explanatory one-sidedness serves to

establish a valuational dichotomy wherein certain phenomena (subjective experiences, in particular) have no standing as scientific claims, but merely indicate the presence of other factors and phenomena at a different, truth-bearing level of reality. In Portmann's words, "the unity of natural science cannot be achieved by reducing biology to only those of its aspects that fit into physics and chemistry. Nature comprises every aspect of life--subjective experience no less than structure" (1964: 37).<sup>2</sup> Portmann's aim is to question the self-sufficiency of contemporary scientific practices, especially as these place limits on what can be accepted into the arena of legitimate scientific knowledge.'

---

<sup>2</sup> As Kohák has written:

The physicalist model, taking as its root metaphors "matter" and "force," may be at most capable of *reducing* the complexity of life's rhythm to its terms, not of *understanding* it in its complexity. The biological model, taking the process of life as its basic metaphor, is far more adequate, but still not sufficient for understanding the life of a moral subject. It adds the dimension of temporality which life adds to the inanimate, but it ignores the distinctive dimension of eternity which humans add to the temporality of the animate. (1984: 18, italics in original)

In Portmann's work, as we will see shortly, this concern with the inadequacy of the biological model in respect of its failure to express the moral character of the subject is cast in terms of survival versus expression. Once again, as I have been suggesting, the moral dimension of life correlates strongly with its addressive aspect.

<sup>3</sup> Portmann's critique of science includes the familiar criticism that control of science research agendas by the state has politicized the search for technical knowledge. But his more basic complaint concerns the practice of

Whether Portmann's analysis of the irreducibility of biological phenomena establishes a way for talking about animal moral status is a matter we will need to explore by critically analyzing his descriptions--akin to a phenomenology--of animal nature.

Portmann is critical of both traditional Darwinism and various modes of mechanism in biology.<sup>4</sup> It is

---

insisting that subjective experience can play no part in a scientific explanation of natural processes. Hence his ongoing debate with evolutionary theory, as we will see in this chapter, centers on his belief that the survival value of animal appearance and behavior does not exhaust all possible explanations. Animals appear and act in certain ways, Portmann claims, precisely because these are the ways in which they attain self-expression.

Levinas argues that the being of animals is merely a matter of survival, and that human being is a breaking with pure being (Wright et. al., 1988: 172). Portmann's arguments both counter and extend this position. As he points out, animal being cannot be restricted to merely a survival imperative without the sacrifice of countless instances of animal behavior that exceeds preservation interests (rituals, for instance). Thus while for Levinas the primary moral condition begins with human being's rupture with pure being, Portmann's perspective would suggest that the primary moral condition is forcefully prefigured in the "mystery" that is animal being. Portmann might agree that the primary moral condition is possible only in the rupture with pure being; but he does not accept that animals exist for the sake of existing, claiming that one of his main roles as a zoologist involves shifting "the viewpoint to the individual animal as an 'end' not a 'means'" (1961: 173). Self-preservation is an evolutionary principle that has an implicit teleological structure, despite the evolutionists' usual assertion that Darwinian theory has done away with teleology.

<sup>4</sup> I want to emphasize that Portmann in no way denies the main tenets of evolutionary theory. His main objection to neo-Darwinism is that it focuses far too narrowly on functional explanations. Portmann refuses to reduce certain

understandable, then, his views have placed him somewhat outside the circle of mainstream thinkers in the biological sciences. In addition, his ready acceptance of the decisive role of "mystery" in scientific research, as Grene suggests, "intensely irritates mechanistically minded biologists" (1968: 22-23). Yet as Grene goes on to argue, a willingness to admit the unexplained, "to face and acknowledge mysteries," should not be viewed as an impediment to scientific thinking, but as an essential step on the road to discovery. Or, as Portmann has written, "our existence cannot but be enhanced by our intuitive grasp of the mystery of hidden being" (1977: 21).<sup>5</sup> Although biology may provide excellent accounts of many biological processes and phenomena, the fundamental mysteriousness of being, Portmann contends, is impervious to strictly biological interrogation. Yet it is only through a willingness to pursue our mysterious natures in whatever directions they may lead that we can hope to attain a deeper knowledge of our condition.

---

aspects of animal being (such as self-expression) to the functions of merely serving the greater interest of survival.

<sup>5</sup> Portmann invokes the theme of mystery throughout his scientific works, but his views on this subject are not unique. For instance, a celebratory discussion of the role that mystery plays in the field of scientific discovery can be found in Gregory Bateson's Steps to an Ecology of Mind (1972).

In this chapter I will examine how Portmann's zoological writings (and occasional philosophical ruminations) can be interpreted within the framework of the animal rights project. My central objective is to show that Portmann's analysis of animal being provides additional evidence for the claim advanced earlier that our sense of moral responsibility for animals arises from our own animal nature, and that the emphasis within animal rights circles to advance an animal ethics in which sympathy and compassion play no substantial part is a misguided effort to delimit moral sensibility to strictly rational considerations.

The ethics of animal liberation is an ethics of estrangement insofar as it posits a chasm of inattention between the ethical territories inhabited by humans and animals. Yet the truly moral position, as I have been indicating, may be more properly recognized by the immediacy of sympathetic connection between Others, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself in concern for the Other's interests. Portmann's arguments against the inherently mechanical nature of many forms of biological research strikes a resonant chord with Bauman's claim that ethical codes can be viewed as systems for reducing responsibility to the mere task of duty fulfillment. That is, mechanism shares with ethics the twin aims of making the individual free from

responsibility, and of making accountable instead the heteronomous code or functional arrangement of parts. In this connection, I will also suggest that Portmann's notion of animal being as characterized by *display* and *centricity* is consonant with Levinas's conception of face as the primal condition of the moral relation. In other words, I will try to demonstrate that Portmann's ideas about animal internality can be placed alongside Levinas's conception of the pre-ontological condition of human moral responsibility as being evidenced in the appearance of the Other's face.

### **A Semiotics of Animal Being**

Portmann's work was influenced by a number of European intellectuals who sought to combine philosophical investigations with biological research.<sup>6</sup> Disenchanted with the implicit mechanism they observed in evolutionary theory, and unwilling to embrace completely the vitalists'

---

<sup>6</sup> A comprehensive list of philosophical biologists is somewhat difficult to draw up if only because there are wide differences in the approaches the main figures have pursued. However, along with Adolf Portmann and Jakob von Uexküll, it is usual to include in the list F. J. J. Buytendijk, Arnold Gehlen, and Walter Garstang. Other thinkers who are sometimes regarded as a second wave in the area are Ludwig Binswanger, Erwin Strauss, and Medard Boss. The list occasionally is extended to include Erich Fromm, Rollo May, and R. D. Laing. In this paper I am only concerned with establishing a starting point for my discussion of Adolf Portmann's work, however, and therefore I will leave aside

teleological doctrines, these writers began a tradition of investigation that came to be known as *philosophical biology* (Grene, 1968). Their main ambition was to show that the inadequacy of mechanistic accounts of biological phenomena might influence scientists to accept that the metaphysical dimensions of both animal and human being were an important part of a comprehensive and scientifically credible account of life. Such a project, to be sure, was exceedingly ambitious, and it is unclear, as Pappé (1967) has observed, to what extent the biological foundations of this perspective have contributed to our understanding of human nature. Nonetheless, the way in which philosophical biology conceptualizes the place of the human animal in the larger scheme of nature, and the way in which it privileges questions of value, are powerful rejoinders to the more arid views generally advanced in Darwinian survival theory.

Of these investigators none had so important an influence on Portmann's thinking as the theoretical biologist, Jakob von Uexküll (1926, 1934, 1940). Born in Estonia in 1864 (d. 1944), Uexküll studied and worked in a number of major European cities, including Heidelberg, Capri, and Hamburg where he established the *Institut für*

---

any further discussion of philosophical biology's predecessors and legacies.

*Umweltforschung* (Institute for *Umwelt* Research). In spite of his influence on developments in biological research in the early decades of the century, Uexküll's work remains largely unknown outside of Europe.

Uexküll conducted field research in many parts of the world, including an extended sojourn in Central Africa. His most important texts, however, focused on the familiar rather than the exotic, and he wrote with a poetic sensibility of such common biological subjects as oak trees, hens, dragonflies, and worms. His attention to ecological context, and his insistence on studying each animal as an individual being, were hallmarks of an approach that sharply distinguished his work from the reductionistic methods that were finding favor with Anglo-American biologists. Although no discussions of the moral status of animals are found in Uexküll's major works, his central principle--that animals are subjects about whom we can only learn through a form of "participatory biology"--is a congenial tenet for animal rights advocates (Uexküll, 1982: 4).

Uexküll's biological writings are characterized by a meticulous attention to the minutiae of the behavioral repertoires of each of the animals he studied. Indeed, his work often exhibits a degree of empathy with the subjects of his research that situates his thinking more in the romantic

than in the modernist tradition. As he put it, "the secret of the world is to be sought not behind objects, but behind subjects" (126: 29). The shift in Uexküll's work from the objectifying practices of mainstream biology, to a mode of subjective empathy, was simultaneously a shift from the coherence and stability of physicalism, to the relative incoherence and instability of individual experience. And by privileging the individual being and its experiences of the world, Uexküll was also privileging a valuational approach to biological phenomena; that is, his wish to see the individual organism as a center of meaningful activity suggested the importance that a *theory of meaning* should play in the biological sciences (Evernden, 1985).

As with other philosophical biologists, one of the defining aspects of Uexküll's work was his lifelong hostility to evolutionary theory. In place of Darwinism he advanced a more metaphysical account of nature, one that would eventually serve as part of the theoretical basis of ethology.<sup>7</sup> But his refusal to concede the value of Darwin's

---

<sup>7</sup> Konrad Lorenz, whose name is now most closely associated with the science of ethology, was a student of Uexküll's. Later in his career, however, Lorenz openly criticized his teacher for the excessively speculative quality he argued had infected Uexküll's scientific theory. (See especially Lorenz, 1977 for an account of his disagreements with Uexküll. Lorenz, 1952 is a classic treatise in which Uexküll's influence on Lorenz and the general discipline of ethology is vividly illustrated.)

ideas was a prejudice that greatly diminished his importance as a biologist for subsequent generations of scientists. Even when evolutionary biology began to incorporate genetics alongside conventional Darwinian principles (Huxley, 1942), Uexküll remained certain that this development would destroy Darwinism. On this point he was clearly mistaken.

That he was so firmly opposed to Darwinism was a consequence of a number of factors, including the presence of an nascent pantheism that is plainly evident in his major works. Elements of preformationism also can be discerned in his theories, a result, perhaps, of his further insistence that progress, as defined by evolutionists, was contradictory to our everyday apprehension of animal organization.<sup>9</sup> But what is most decisive about Uexküll's break with conventional Darwinism is that in order to deal with the biological questions that captivated him, he was forced to posit a perspective in which the activities of living beings could be accounted for in both historical and synchronic aspects without resorting to the principles of survival value and relative fitness. By viewing the animal as a subject with the capacity to act upon its world, Uexküll transposed several important terms found in traditional Darwinian explanations. Animals were no longer

the objects upon which random forces acted; they were instead the subjects of a meticulously designed world with the power to make their intentional natures evident by responding to, and acting upon, the worlds which they themselves created. In Uexküll's account, animals are capable of the exercise of agency rather than being seen as the passive objects of nature's laws. The notion of animal autonomy thus played a prominent role in what Uexküll called *Umwelt* theory.

Of course, the idea of agency makes good sense in the social sciences, especially in discussions of the behavior of human agents. Yet for Uexküll, the idea that animals have only an object-like status in a world of dead and meaningless matter was the expression of a deliberate blindness to the fact that close studies of animal life plainly revealed their subjectivity. It was mechanism that led the vivisectionists to nail unanesthetized dogs upon dissecting boards, and to explain the animals' cries as merely mechanical action. It was mechanism, in other words, that compelled the biologist to deny his or her own humanity in service to the prejudice that animals were devoid of subjectivity. Uexküll believed that in order to put such

---

<sup>8</sup> See Bowler, 1984 and Gould, 1977 for more on the doctrine of preformationism.

follies permanently to rest, it was critical that we reconceptualize our notion of animal being, and begin to regard the world from the perspective of the individual animal subject. Unlike classical Darwinism in which survival provides a catch-all explanation for animal behavior, *Umwelt* theory stresses the non-causal and non-determinative aspects of animal being; that is, the abstract calculations of genetic fitness were ignored in favor of an approach that focussed on animals as subject who did things for reasons of their own. If animals were automata, Uexküll averred, then the study of animal behavior were merely be an adjunct discipline of physics. But even the casual observer of other creatures would testify to the foolishness of such thinking, for animals are beings we can come to know, come to love, and come to understand. We do not treat machines with the kind of sympathetic concern with which we approach animals. Thus in breaking with Darwinism, Uexküll was not only rejecting the more mechanistic aspects of modern science, but also reframing the methods he believed were appropriate in biological research.

One consequence of Uexküll's excommunication from the ranks of orthodox evolutionists is that his investigations of the sign-worlds of animals have been of particular interest not to biologists, but to philosophers and

semioticians.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, Uexküll's research was decisive in opening up new paths in biology (to borrow a phrase from Portmann), and it is unfair, I think, to suggest that his contributions are little more than historical curiosities (as Thomas Goudge has said [1972]). To dismiss Uexküll's ideas in this way, is to accept the primacy of the mechanistic doctrines against which he argued. Rather than judge him by the criteria invoked by his critics, his ideas need to be assessed as an independent body of research.

### **The Subject of the Animal World**

Uexküll's main ideas are easily understood, although the details of his arguments are sometimes hard to grasp. These difficulties are mainly a result of the idiosyncratic nomenclature that Uexküll devised to describe biological phenomena for which he could find no common terms. In addition, the terminology that Uexküll devised reflected his belief that all life is interconnected in a form of complementarity. Hence the dominant metaphors found in his work are quite different from those found in Darwinism.

---

<sup>9</sup> See in particular Thomas Sebeok's The Sign & Its Masters (1979), Chapter 10 of which is entitled *Neglected figures in the history of semiotic inquiry: Jakob von Uexküll* (see also Sebeok, 1986; Uexküll, 1982). Uexküll's influence on philosophy can be found in a number of places, most notably Cassirer (1944). His influence on the work of philosopher

Nature is not red in tooth and claw in *Umwelt* theory; rather, it is a symphonic celebration of mutual relation. Going even further than Kropotkin's (1914) thesis of "mutual aid" which challenged the survivalist ethos of traditional Darwinian thinking, Uexküll presented a view of the organic order as a purposive expression of the inherent meaningfulness of life. It was not simply a matter of reciprocal altruism that enabled animals to form social bonds, as Kropotkin and later sociobiologists would have it, but an underlying plan of meaningful affiliations.

According to Uexküll, each species of animal inhabits its own universe, or *Umwelt*.<sup>10</sup> That is, the members of each species have particular sense modalities which enable them to perceive only certain aspects of the environment. The environment, therefore, provides the materials out of which each *Umwelt* is composed. Each being, he argued, moves through the world as though surrounded by an invisible soap

---

José Ortega y Gasset is discussed at some length in Marias, 1970.

<sup>10</sup> As Sebeok (1979: 194) notes, the term *Umwelt* is actually rather difficult to translate. Although "its sense is quite clear," he says, it has been translated by a large number of English expressions, among which we find *ecological niche*, *experienced world*, *psychological* or *subjective* or *significant environment*, *behavioral life space*, *ambient extension*, and *ipsefact*. Sebeok's preferred expressions are *cognitive map* or *scheme*, or *mind set*. I have chosen to follow Uexküll's English translators in rendering the word as *subjective universe*, and *subjective lifeworld*.

bubble that demarcates the limits of its subjective lifeworld. But more than merely imposing limits, the *Umwelt* of each creature is also a product of its active engagement with the world, and thus establishes the possibilities by which the creature can interact with the world. The obvious somatic differences between humans and animals shows how differently constructed are the worlds in which each lives.

For instance, what humans see when they look at a garden, Uexküll points out, is not what the bee sees when it surveys the same landscape. Although we see the different colors and varying shapes and sizes of flowers, the bee sees a more limited range of colors, and can detect only those shapes that are meaningful in a bee's world. For instance, bees can only differentiate between open and closed shapes. Open shapes draw them forward, while closed shapes such as squares and circles repel them (1934: 58ff). Open shapes are more likely than closed shapes to indicate an open blossom filled with nectar, and as the task of collecting honey fulfills the bee's most vital impulses, the attraction of, and repulsion from, different configurations is logically explained. Moreover, such arguments indicate the way in which the *vital* and the *meaningful* are immediately linked as biological phenomena. Uexküll argues that the bee's *Umwelt* is structurally complete in possessing a schema

that permits such basic differentiations. It is what the shapes mean to the bee that is decisive in *Umwelt* theory, not merely how the bee responds to them. The bee and the human live in different worlds of meaning.

The totality of all possible stimuli a particular being might apprehend is its sign-world, or *merkwelt*. The sum of all possible responses by which the creature might then act upon these signs (or perceptual cues) is its action-world, or *wirkwelt*. The *Umwelt* exists, then, as the sum of the signs a being apprehends, and the actions it takes in response to those signs. All animals are therefore actively related to their worlds through the continual activity of semiotic engagement.

Uexküll suggests that this mode of conceptualizing a being's relation to the environment in terms of perception and action (receptor cells and effector cells, as he calls them) parallels the structure of a question-and-answer dialectic (1934: 9). Each being can be described as an interlocutor in the world, interrogating its *Umwelt* in order to find meaning in the objects with which relations are possible. The relation between organisms and their world Uexküll also referred to as the *functional circle* (or *meaning circle*) (1940). Thus Uexküll's work demonstrated a relation between biology and concepts found in contemporary

information theory, such as *feedback* and *homeostasis*. Creatures respond to the signs present in the environment from which their *Umwelt* is drawn, and then act upon these signs according to the specific needs inherent in their *innenwelt* (their internal *Umwelt*). Each species constructs and lives in an *Umwelt* peculiar to its innate capacities of perception, interpretation, and action. If there is meaning to life in *Umwelt* theory, one might say, it is that life itself is meaning.

It should be evident from this discussion that Uexküll's epistemology was mainly influenced by the Kantian tradition. Kant had argued that although our experiences might be reduced to sensory atoms, all experiences must be conceptualized by an experiencing 'I' (Kant, 1984). Hence Kant emphasized the contribution of an experiencing subject to knowledge. So too Uexküll's main contribution to the study of animals was his emphasis on the animal as subject.<sup>11</sup> "When a dog runs," he wrote, "the animal moves

---

<sup>11</sup> "Without a living subject," writes Uexküll, "there can be neither space nor time. With this, biology has ultimately established its connection with the doctrine of Kant, which it intends to exploit in the *Umwelt* theory by stressing the decisive role of the subject" (1934: 13).

Despite these observations, Uexküll says very little about the subject as a theoretical idea, except to mention that he is using Kant's philosophy of the human subject to construct a biology of subjectivities that includes animals as well. The term 'subject', he says, "is used to include

its legs; when a sea urchin runs, the legs move the animal" (1934: 32). In responding to the perceptual cues (or signs) in its environment, the dog acts in a way that makes evident its subjectivity; but in being acted upon by the reflex arc principle, the sea urchin shows itself to be devoid of subjectivity. Hence Uexküll delimited the quality of being-a-subject to the so-called higher animals. Yet the difference between being the mover, and being the object of movement, was important for the task of denying mechanistic accounts of animal action.

Ironically, Uexküll was attracted early on in his career to mechanism. But he came to reverse his views, concluding that "far from subjective notions being in principle eliminable, biology cannot be understood without explicit appeal to subjects" (Rollin, 1989: 227). Uexküll wrote:

---

all the mental and spiritual powers" (1926: xvi). But more than this, the subject is also understood in Uexküll's work as making apparent the "conformity to plan" that he says underlies all active being-in-the-world. In other words, the ability to perceive the neutral objects in my environment and to transform them into meaning-carriers by virtue of acting upon them (picking a fruit in order to eat it, for instance), requires that I have some sense of spatial relations, causality, and so on. For Uexküll, this is a clear illustration of Kant's thesis that the forms of

In the world of the physicist there are only objects, which react on one another through the medium of space; in the world of the biologist there are only appearances, which react on one another through the medium of the subject. (1926: 31)

This was a point of considerable importance for Uexküll's *Umwelt* theory. The subject is the sole guarantor of what passes for local realities; there are, Uexküll argues, "purely subjective realities in the *Umwelten*" (1934: 72). As with Kant, Uexküll denies that we (or any other animal) can ever know things-in-themselves; all we can know are appearances ("All reality is subjective appearances" [Uexküll, 1926: xv]). Hence biology, he asserts, should be the science of making explicit the *umwelten* of other beings. This shows in what ways Uexküll's ideas eventually led to the science of ethology with its emphasis on understanding empathetically the modes of animal activity we observe taking place within specific ecological contexts. Even as we can only approximate the subjective worlds of other animals, so too those worlds are themselves only approximations of what the physicist might construe as reality.

---

knowledge pre-given in consciousness play their part in the effector signs and operational world of the subject.

For Uexküll, the major challenge to understanding an animal's experiences of its world was that each species' *Umwelt* was constituted through species-specific sensual modalities. Humans live in an *Umwelt* constituted predominantly from the sense of sight, but dogs, for instance, are primarily olfaction-centered beings. Their sensitivity to various odors and scents attunes them to an aspect of the environmental sensorium that passes us by almost entirely. To understand a dog's world--or to approximate as closely as possible what a dog's experience of its world must be like--it is necessary to think in olfactory rather than visual terms. Needless to say, this is difficult to do, especially since human imagination often reduces to visualization. Thinking olfactorily rather than thinking visually is a cognitive function that humans, by and large, seem unable to accomplish. Thinking visually, by contrast, is one of the basic components of human consciousness. One might presume, then, that part of canine consciousness is a capacity for cognitive olfaction, and olfactory memory. Uexküll thus signaled the importance of thinking about thinking in respect of an embodied epistemology.

For Uexküll, the differences between species coincides with the different *umwelten* within which a being's

subjectivity is constituted. Subjectivity is a state of semiotic encounter where self becomes self-as-subject. In addition, each self-as-subject actively constitutes the *Umwelt* in which it exists. As Uexküll says, the subject lies at the center of the *Umwelt* it constructs, serving as the ultimate reference point of meaning (1940: 87). In this sense, subjectivity, in addition to its irreducible Kantian aspect, has an active and transformative dimension in Uexküll's theories. In reaching out into the *Umwelt* with its effector organs, the subject seeks out only those objects that are meaning-carriers for it; indeed, Uexküll claims that unlike humans, animals are incapable of "enter[ing] into a relationship with a neutral object" (1940: 27). This is because an object can only truly be neutral to one who has assumed the position of an observer, and animals, he suggests, can never adopt this role. Thus a curious irony in *Umwelt* theory is that our ability to regard ourselves as objects in the world is ultimately the feature that most decisively differentiates us from other animals. In other words, because we can see objects that are neutral to us, we are able to assume a third-person perspective on ourselves, and to meta-communicate about our experiences of the world in a way that animals cannot. Hence animals are bound to a world of meaningful objects while humans,

according to Uexküll, are capable of formulating notions of neutrality. Meaning thus assumes a kind of *first philosophy* status in *Umwelt* theory, an idea that suggests that our ability to enter into relations with neutral objects may be connected in some way with our moral relations with others.

### **Meaning and Counterpoint**

Uexküll's concept of meaning is, however, a curious notion. In *Umwelt* theory meaning has a dual signification: it is a form of relation between subject and object that exceeds causality, and it is a relation between a subject and its medium, as in the case of the fit that exists between a fish's fin and the medium of water. Both understandings show Uexküll's opposition to strictly Darwinian explanations. Objects in the world do not simply cause an animal to behave in a particular way; rather the animal responds to the object (which has become a meaning-carrier) because the object resonates with the animal's receptor organs. The moth, for example, hears the bat's high-pitched squeak and flees because the sound the bat emits is meaningful to the moth (Uexküll, 1940). The moth does not respond to the bat's sound mechanically, as though it had been physically moved by, say, a gust of wind. It would be more accurate to say that the moth responds as a

man will respond to a change in a traffic signal, or to the sound of his name being spoken. Although we might try to reduce the man's behaviors to the stimulus-response model, we cannot escape the fact that they are responses to meaningful objects in the man's *Umwelt*. They may be habituated responses (or instances of what Uexküll refers to as the *familiar path*), but this does not eliminate the role of meaning from the relation between the man and the sound of his name being spoken. In *Umwelt* theory, meaning is a union of subject and object in a relation that is non-determinative in any purely causal sense. Meaning is a contrapuntal joining of subject and object, a joining that is explicitly complementary in structure. As Sebeok has put it:

It was one of [Uexküll's] greatest merits that he squarely faced...the ineluctable fact that signification is not a peculiarity of language, or even of human cognition, but occurs, in various manifestations, throughout organic existence. (1979: 200)

Hence in *Umwelt* theory, meaning is not regarded as merely referential. Rather, meaning has a non-isomorphic quality; that is, what means is what resonates, not what simply refers. As mentioned above, for Uexküll, meaning is conditioned by the question-and-answer structure; that is,

meaning is a kind of unity even as it is a recognition of ongoing alterity. Hence his dominant metaphor of explaining living process as a contrapuntal organization. Each (individual) note is unique; but each note is only meaningful in relation to the irreducible alterity of the other notes in the composition.

Perhaps nothing distinguishes Uexküll's approach to biological phenomena as decisively as this metaphor of musical counterpoint. This metaphor predisposed him to view the connections among living things as being directed by a *blauplan*, or blueprint. Hence he rejected both the necessity for random biological events, as Darwin had described them, as well as the fortuitous contingencies by which natural selection operated. Conceived as a musical composition, nature thus has its meaning in the effective performance of its melody. And, as with any composition, the role of the composer is a paramount consideration.

It is at this point that Uexküll slips into a kind of natural theology. As a contrapuntal expression of purpose, nature is a series of exquisitely articulated relations between organisms and their environments; between organisms and one another; and even between different ecological niches. Hence there is no evolutionary progress according to *Umwelt* theory, for each period in world history is but a

variation on a larger theme, and no period can therefore claim a higher or more privileged station. Uexküll suggests that we must understand the role that God has played in the composition of the harmonies that are nature's living relations if we are to fully grasp the significance of nature's "master plan." Invoking the same image that had entranced the theologian William Paley, Uexküll suggests that

every machine, a pocket-watch for example, is always constructed centripetally. In other words, the individual parts of the watch, such as its hands, spring, wheels, and cogs, must always be produced first, so that they may be added to a common centerpiece.

In contrast, the construction of an animal...always starts centrifugally from a single cell, which first develops into a gastrula, and then into more and more new organ buds.

In both cases, the transformation underlies a plan: the 'watch-plan' proceeds centripetally and the [animal-plan] centrifugally. Two completely opposite principles govern the joining of the parts of the two objects. (1940: 40-41)

The centrifugal plan of the living being is an unfolding of nature's immanent harmony. These ideas, Uexküll concedes, will hardly appeal to modern scientists (1940: 70ff). But this is no concern for him. In order to comprehend the meaning of organic structure, he says, we must accept that the unfolding of life is always directed from the cells outward in conformance with a plan. The acorn's cells can have no knowledge of how to develop; hence their growth must be directed via conformance to a larger plan. Just as the individual notes of a melody "unfold" in the performance of the piece, so too the individual *ego-qualities* of the cells assume their place in the unified composition of nature.

Employing yet another metaphor, we might say that the words of a sentence have their individual meaning, but that their ultimate meaning is found in their interrelations and the governing principles of grammar, syntax, and pragmatics--language's "master plan." And, in both the composition and the linguistic utterance, meaning is related to the intentions of the composer and the speaker. In like fashion, Uexküll argues that the meaning of animal being, though found in part in the individual composition of the creature's form, is ultimately discovered in the harmonious articulation of its place in nature.

Uexküll's influence on Portmann is found mainly in the latter's insistence that animal form is a social phenomenon that exceeds the causal arguments found in most evolutionary perspectives. Moreover, Uexküll's claim that biology must reframe animals as subjects to be understood from within, rather than as objects to be explained from without, has been of particular importance to Portmann who also has focused his research on the individual animal. Hence I want to turn next to consider how Portmann's interpretations and extensions of Uexküll's work offer a way of conceptualizing the notion of moral relations with animals. Although he has rejected certain elements of Uexküll's approach--sometimes arguing that Uexküll is still too mechanistic--Portmann has carried the tradition in philosophical biology further than his predecessors. Perhaps even more than Uexküll, Portmann's perspective challenges numerous orthodox views in the life sciences.

### **The Mystery of Appearance**

A reader new to Adolf Portmann's works would likely see nothing heretical in a preliminary perusal of his books.

Animals as Social Beings (1961), New Paths in Biology (1964), Animal Forms and Patterns: A Study of the Appearance of Animals (1967), A Zoologist Looks at Humankind (1990)--

each volume is filled with the technical vocabulary found in most works on biology. Diagrams, line drawings, and photographs illustrate the arguments, explicating many of the more complicated themes. Latinized binomial nomenclature litters the pages, and detailed analyses of the minutiae of life forms carry the reader into the remarkable world of organic variation.

Yet only several pages into any one of Portmann's books it becomes apparent that there is a different sort of sensibility at work here, an attitude to the study of animals at odds with conventional biological explanations. The examples are familiar--the nesting habits of sand-wasps, varieties of protective coloration, the mating practices of dragonflies--but the language betrays a tendency toward thinking about animals not as representatives of species, but as individuals whose active engagement with their environment is a world-constitutive dimension of organic being. One is struck immediately by Portmann's resistance to universalizing tendencies (on the order of "species behavior", for instance), in favor of individual intentions, moods, and dispositions. In a sense, Portmann's descriptions tend to bring animals alive.

Portmann challenges his readers not simply with impassioned arguments against the value of traditional

methods in biological research, but with the seemingly pedestrian observations of a writer insistent that there is more to the everyday experience of seeing animals as subjects in the world than is expressed in the functional accounts usually given in science. His fondness for metaphors drawn from music and art (Uexküll's influence) are further indications that his response to his own scientific investigations is more metaphysical than physical, more spiritual than material. He is striving continually, he confesses, for "a new conception of the organism" (1961: 232).

One of Portmann's more challenging claims is his argument that animal appearance often exceeds the putative demands of evolutionary function. Rejecting what he regards as the excessively utilitarian nature of conventional Darwinian explanations of animal appearance, Portmann has argued that we never explain fully the "meaning" of animal appearance by appealing to neo-Darwinian accounts of natural (and sexual) selection. Portmann does not deny that evolutionary theory tells us a good deal about animals. He does deny, however, that evolutionary explanations can provide us with sufficient information to dispel entirely the mystery that is animal nature. As he writes:

The more closely we look at those phenomenal aspects of life whose sole purpose it is to serve self-expression and not self-preservation, the more evident it becomes that those forms on which technical thought prefers to fasten are merely the most obvious. We begin to realize that the vast majority of living forms cannot be explained in terms of technical or preservation effects alone, but that they must be evaluated first and foremost in terms of self-expression. (1964: 99)

The distinction between self-expression and self-preservation is decisive in Portmann's writings. Both classical and neo-Darwinian approaches have stressed almost exclusively the preservative function of appearance, leaving aside the expressive dimension as generally beyond the scope of scientific interest. Yet as Portmann points out, this constant probing into the functional (or selective) advantage of particular configurations and forms "makes us strangers to the appearance of the living creatures around us, to what is evident to our senses" (1967: 17).

Portmann's emphasis on the phenomenal world of appearance challenges the more widespread scientific practice of seeking truth *behind* appearance. Modern biology, one might argue, is a hermeneutics of suspicion, where truth is an invisible, underlying reality evading immediate apprehension

(Ricoeur, 1974; Gadamer, 1981).<sup>12</sup> The self-expressive aspect of animal appearance, however, suggests an immediacy of being for which evolutionary explanations play only a secondary role. The primacy of the "beholder" is never far from Portmann's analysis of nature.

Portmann argues that contemporary animal research has focused too narrowly on the microscopic, genetic level of information to the exclusion of the realm of appearance. In this respect, his critique of reductionism in biology has been described by Grene (1968) as an attempt to counter Galileo's claim that "nature is written in the mathematical language." Hence Portmann designates the world of perceptible organic form as *authentic phenomena*, and classifies as *inauthentic phenomena* those aspects of organic being discernible only in fields such as molecular biology. What is authentic, he argues, are those aspects of nature

---

<sup>12</sup> In his critique of "scientific or algorithmic terminology," Levinas has also suggested that we obscure the Other in a what might be construed a hermeneutics of suspicion. The aims of our technocratic ethos, he suggests is that

one should reduce perception to the science which the possible transformation of the world justifies, man to the complexes exhibited by psychoanalysis, society to its economic structures. Everywhere one should find the sense beneath the meaning, beneath the metaphor, the sublimation, the literature. There would then be "serious," real meanings, put in scientific terms, oriented by needs and, in general, by economy. (1964: 44-45)

which have sensual immediacy; those that require the mediation of extensive technological devices in order to be perceived are inauthentic.<sup>13</sup>

Following Galileo's model, Locke described the world as divisible into primary and secondary qualities (Locke, 1690). This Lockean/Galilean perspective saw nature as a mathematical world of primary qualities composed of breadth, height, and extension--qualities, independent of consciousness, measurable by objective instruments. Secondary qualities were those phenomena (or experiences) dependent on consciousness--taste, smell, color, and so on. And, as our discussion of Descartes has shown, reality as defined by science became the world of primary qualities, the world in which objectivity was privileged over subjectivity. In an especially forceful articulation of this idea Galileo wrote:

I think that tastes, odors, colors, and so on are no more than mere names so far as the object in which we place them is concerned, and that they reside only in the consciousness. Hence *if the living creatures were removed*, all these qualities would be wiped away and

---

<sup>13</sup> Portmann discusses technology in his work only in passing, but the distinction he draws between authentic and inauthentic phenomena suggests something of the philosophical work of Don Ihde and Albert Borgmann,

annihilated. But since we have imposed upon them special names, distinct from those of the other and real qualities mentioned previously, we wish to believe that they really exist as actually different from those. (cited in Grene, 1968: 14)

The Galilean proposal that a nature devoid of animal being is a nature in which only "real" qualities remain, reveals a perspective in which life is regarded as an impediment in the quest for knowledge.<sup>13</sup> In Portmann's view, by contrast, comprehending the nature of reality is determined by our ability to fathom the multileveled phenomena of organic being. Animal appearance, including camouflage, iridescent feathers, complex patterns in coloration, and so forth, points to the inescapable conclusion that animals appear in multifarious forms of self-expression. Moreover, animal appearance *is meant to be seen*; that is, animal appearance is an aspect of a relational dynamic in which self and other interpenetrate one another's lifeworlds or *umwelten*. Appearance holds meaning for the Other; it is an *addressive* aspect of animal being. What was authentic for Galileo precisely because of its independence from consciousness, is

---

architects of the philosophy of technology. See for example, Ihde, 1993, 1995; Borgmann, 1995.

<sup>14</sup> As Hans Jonas has put it, in the world of science, "life has become the stumbling block of theory" (1966: 10).

inauthentic for Portmann for just that reason. Portmann's notion of authenticity is essentially relational in character. In Portmann's analysis, Locke's secondary qualities of sight, sound, and color have become the primary qualities of living being.

The importance Portmann ascribes here to the self-expressive aspect of animal being, and his ambition to invert the primary/secondary quality hierarchy enshrined in science, suggest an additional connection between organic nature and the realm of moral thought. In the context of Portmann's analysis, ethics can be interpreted as one of Locke's primary qualities as it is produced by objective instruments (laws, legislative codes, professional bodies, juridical provisions) while remaining subject to strict forms of measurement. Moreover, in ethics, the fact of subjectivity is a problem which is generally dealt with by denying that emotional concerns should play any part in the task of rendering proper ethical decisions. As a primary quality, in other words, ethics has assumed a scientific status which permits us to speak in universalistic terms. And, as Portmann suggests in his critique of biology's near-exclusive focus on molecular processes:

The lowest state of life has its own laws--indeed, many laws holding at this, the macromolecular stage, are so

universally valid that in the choice of material one can, if necessary, go to plants instead of animals, and vice versa. (1964: 39)

The universality of natural law is possible only at the lowest levels of organization because it is at these levels that virtual identity reigns, and difference (or individuality) is merely a descriptive issue, the task of distinguishing between similar particles. So too, in order to be universal in scope, ethics must be reduced by a similar process to an artificial and arbitrary level of social organization at which individuality and autonomy are made subservient to the "laws" of the prevailing ethical code. Individuals matter less than the precept that all are treated alike; no one, in other words, is made differently from the others.

Morality, in this interpretation, is one of Locke's secondary qualities, for it relies on the fundamental necessity of consciousness; repudiates the need for external instruments of measurement; and embraces the relational dimension of its being (i.e., fidelity to the Other as opposed to duty to the law). Morality also speaks directly to the individual and his/her responsibility, thus avoiding the pitfall of searching for the illusive universal maxim. The impulse to reach out for the Other, and the self-

expressive aspect of the animal, describe conditions of being (and being-for) for which legislation and science have prescribed relative inattention.

Portmann discusses the notion of appearance in a number of ways, including the idea that appearance is simply given in somatic form. But his main concern is with uncovering the active process by which an animal reveals itself in an overt act of self-expression. The manner in which animals show themselves in organic forms and surface patterns Portmann calls *Selbstdarstellung*. Grene translates this literally as "life's showing of itself on the surface," suggesting that a more convenient English equivalent might be *display* (1968: 21). But what Grene does not explain is that display can be intransitive or transitive; we can speak of an animal's *display-of* courage, for instance, or we can talk of an animal's *display-for* another. This active dimension of display-for--what might be called its interpellative function--is a revelation of the animal's self-expressive impulse. Whereas an animal's display-of itself serves the interests of self-preservation, its display-for the Other supersedes such functional determination. This observation raises a number of important considerations. Specifically, if animals are optically arrayed in ways that serve no obvious preservative

function, how might we explain these appearances in a fashion that neither contradicts scientific principles, nor reduces the phenomenon to scientific principles? If some display features of an animal are answered in the ontological language of survival, are there other display features that are beyond ontology? If we reply that an animal evinces certain display features not for survival purposes, but for the purpose of self-expression, is that not merely a tautology, or, perhaps, a meaningless explanation? Is this not much like answering "why?" with "because"?

I do not want to suggest at this point that Portmann's analysis is a variation of Levinas's work. But I would like to suggest that we at least consider that the animal's capacity to display-itself-for the Other might resonate with Levinas's notion of being-for the Other. One concept does not, of course, reduce to the other, for there are still important distinctions between them that should be reiterated. In Levinas's work, our attunement is to the call to responsibility of the Other, while in Portmann's analysis, the element of display he describes can most accurately be viewed as a kind of reciprocal beholding of the other's form. Yet there are important points of convergence insofar as both are interested in exploring what

might be seen as the way that ontology (Levinas) and science (Portmann) are exceeded by the Other's presence. If, for Levinas, the Other is beyond ontology, for Portmann the Other is beyond mere being (Darwinian self-preservative selection principles). Even without the addition of the disclosure of obligation, there is a curious parallel here in that both thinkers are challenging the sufficiency of specific aspects of the Western intellectual tradition.

Portmann argues that in its ability to display-for, the animal reveals itself in a way that actively uncovers its subjectivity; the surface nature of its displaying-for, in other words, both conceals and reveals the subjectivity that emerges through self-expression. Hence our apprehension of the animal Other, as with our apprehension of another person, is a turning toward the Other as the bearer of some form of inner life, irrespective of the specific nature of its outward appearance. The appearance of the Other alerts us to the presence of some quality that transcends a body's occupation of physical place; for Levinas, this is the Other's status as "enigma", for Portmann it is the Other as "mystery". What is met in the animal's visage is an otherness that is otherwise than mere survival. When I meet the animal face-to-face as an individual, the proximity I experience cannot be indifferent; there is more to the

encounter than is present in our being-with one another. In a passage in which echoes of Levinas's thinking can be heard, Grene writes:

It is, indeed, on those occasions when we meet the eyes of an animal with our own--just as we encounter our own kind "face-to-face"--that we acknowledge most directly the centered depth of animal life. A dog, unnaturally [sic] bound to human life, directs to his master a mute appeal that seems at first sight to make him, like a Hegelian slave, a personality only in relation to another, fuller personality. Yet, turned back into itself by the impossible barrier that language erects between ourselves and other creatures, his look displays at the same time a structured resonance of mood, of character, sometimes almost of something analogous to wisdom. (1968: 25)

At the risk of pushing too forcibly a fit between Grene's account of Portmann's work, and Levinas's concept of face, the resonances are remarkable (see my earlier discussion of Darwin's analysis of the evolution of the moral sense). The idea that animals comprise centers of subjective experience by which they relate to their surroundings and to others in purposeful behavior, suggests something of the minimal conditions by which Levinas describes the face of the Other.

In the addressive aspect of animal appearance, that is, one can discern an authority without force; the animal calls to the Other in the very fact of its incarnation as subject. Hence incarnation has the paradoxical function of bringing into existence both the individuality of the being, and the Other-oriented impulse by which being is secured and maintained. John Berger writes:

The eyes of an animal when they consider a man are attentive and wary. The same animal may well look at other species in the same way. He does not reserve a special look for man. But by no other species except man will the animal's look be recognized as familiar. Other animals are held by the look. Man becomes aware of himself returning the look. (1980: 2-3)

In the face-to-face encounter with the animal Other there is both familiarity and an accentuated self-awareness. But this familiarity is experienced across the barrier of species, across the abyss of alterity that separates us from the animal. Its source is the internality of the animal, its centered subjectivity. What we relate to in the face-to-face encounter is not merely the animal as other, but the animal as life-bearing being, a center individuality, however differently developed in comparison with our own. Strangely, perhaps paradoxically, it is the invisible

structure of what Jonas calls simply "life per se" that strikes the resonant chord within us and deepens our sense of self-awareness (Jonas, 1966). As Portmann writes:

Both philosophy and psychology have come to realize the importance of moods as determining the way Man experiences and reacts to his environment. A mood is not the subjective disturbance or distortion of a normal, neutral state, but the basis of a changing 'normality'. We all know of things we are only capable of doing when 'in the mood'. That mood will govern our feelings about ourselves and our environment when we are in it, and may also have physical effects--e.g. a mood of great misery may literally cause nausea. Now, however careful we must be in applying the contents of human experience to animals, it is evident that animals too have their 'moods', in which we may include such states as hunger and repletion, sleepiness, contentment or restlessness, solitary and gregarious, mating and parental moods, and many others. (1961: 125)

Portmann does not separate the inner condition of animal subjectivity from its outward appearance, but recognizes the interpenetration of the internal and external dimensions of organic life. In other words, even as Portmann stresses the concept of appearance, he does so in

the context of seeking to provide an analysis of animal subjectivity; that is, the goal of outward manifestation is a mode of self-expression conditioned by a relational aspect. Animal mood (and Portmann extends this concept even to insects!) is primarily a function of subjective experience, and cannot be reduced to instinct.

The decisive element in all of this, I believe, is that animal appearance, in addition to being something we might explain, is also at the same time *something to which we respond*. Being responds to appearance. We may explain the physical constituents of organic being, but our response to perceiving the living world is another matter entirely. We do not respond to the macromolecular substrates of the animal, as these offer no possibility of immediate apprehension. But the animal as centered being is something to which we respond at a different, personal level of experience. The face-to-face encounter with the animal Other may even demand that we respond.

Our responses may be aesthetic or moral, but their experiential nature does not militate against their claim to importance. Portmann's continual emphasis on animal appearance can be seen, then, in the context of this relation between self-expression and beholding, between the beholder and the beholden. Just as the moral condition is

established in that initial face-to-face encounter with the Other--and just as that encounter demands of the beholder a response that will lead into responsibility--so too the structure of animal appearance can be viewed in light of its relational structure. To behold the animal is to respond to its appearance, to acknowledge its individuality as subject. It may also be to feel the pull of moral commitment, to experience one's response beginning its transformation into responsibility. Morality, to borrow from Berger (1980), may be that haunting experience of familiarity by which we feel we "know" the meaning of the animal's look. To experience the force of moral compulsion is to be possessed by the social ghosts of the Other (Gergen, 1991).

### **The Map is Not the Territory**

This power of animal display to configure its world is explained further in Portmann's analysis of territory. An animal's territory, he writes, is "like a magnetic field in having the highest tension at the center, gradually reduced the further you are from that center" (1961: 219).

Territory is space with a structure

like a magnetic field with lines of force which the physicist makes visible; indeed considering the progressive intensity with which it is defended, we

might speak of the tension of the field and the intensity of the various points in it--as long as we manage to keep in mind the special, non-homogenous character of a living 'magnetic field'. (1961: 176)

The metaphor of magnetism is not meant to imply simply an attraction-bearing core at the heart of a specific place; rather, magnetism also indicates that animals constitute territory by the fact of their presence in space.<sup>15</sup> The animal itself is the center of its territory, and fields of influence emanate outward from its incarnate presence. The animal *produces* territory in the active process of being, and assumes a kind of territory-status at the same time.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> A good deal of recent work has been done on the theme of space, much of it from a self-described postmodern perspective. I will not enter into these discussions in this paper. For the purposes of this essay I will follow current practices (which Portmann's translators adhere to only sporadically) in describing "place" as an objectively measured area of geographical dimensions independent of consciousness. "Space" is a subjective phenomenon created by the presence of living being. It should be apparent, incidentally, that this distinction can be read as an extension of Locke's primary and secondary qualities, and that Portmann's emphasis, once again, is on the so-called secondary quality of place. (A standard contemporary source in the area of space and philosophy is Soja, 1989.)

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Bateson's (1972) illustration of cybernetic theory with the story of the blind man's cane is similar to the account Portmann offers concerning the animal's capacity to create territory. Bateson asks, where does the man end, and where does the man's environment begin? At the point where his hand grasps the cane's handle, or at the terminus of the cane? Bateson argues that the man and his cane form a system from which neither could be separated without destroying that system. So too, it makes little sense to

Territory depends on the *appearance* of the animal, but, more crucially, depends on the *presence* of organic being:

If the dragonfly's wing-structure is a source of astonishment and delight for our gaze, and a fact full of unsolved problems for research, an equally astonishing fact is the dragonfly's possession of a daily territory, an integration of the surrounding space into the individual insect's experience, a space of which that insect is the center, which in a clearly understandable way belongs to it and greatly extends its effective 'presence' beyond the bounds of the body. If we examine very thoroughly a higher animal's nervous system and sense organs, we must also penetrate into the patterns of behavior whereby the animal makes a section of the space-time continuum into an integrated

---

seek for a clear demarcation between the animal and its territory. True, like the man and his cane, the animal and its territory are composed of different substances. Yet their complementary interaction forms an ecosystemic relation in which the individual components have ceased to exist as strictly divisible units.

It is worth noting in passing that Portmann, like Bateson, was drawn to the possibilities of using cybernetics as a means for developing a philosophical biology which avoided the apparent pitfalls of neo-Darwinism's exclusive focus on selection. In particular, Portmann wrote that he felt cybernetics could add much to the mystery of the "self" as that problem occurred in biology. There seems to be no evidence, however, that either Portmann or Bateson relied on the other's insights in their respective work despite their overlapping interests.

part of its life filled with significant features.

(1961: 232)

Passages of this sort are remarkable not merely for the poetic vision Portmann brings to his observations, but for the philosophical sophistication with which he frames his analysis. That an insect can become the focal point of a prolonged meditation on the phenomenology of territory is an example of the manner in which Portmann challenges his reader to awaken to the complexity (and mystery) of organic form. An animal's territory is an extension of its being, an extension, as it were, of its self (Evernden, 1985). Whereas the animal's appearance gives evidence of its subjectivity, and in turn expresses the presence of its being to Others, it is the internality of the animal that produces territory--that transforms place into space. Portmann uses the dragonfly example to highlight the being-constitutive nature of territory, for the dragonfly occupies a different territory each day. Its territory exists only in relation to its subjective intentions, and cannot be conceptualized, therefore, as a geographical region. The dragonfly's appearance addresses the Other; its internality creates its space.

This internality--or centricity--is the second major feature of animal being after display. Centricity, Grene

writes, is the English translation chosen for *Weltbeziehung durch Innerlichkeit*, for which a more literal translation would be "relation to the environment through inwardness" (Greene, 1968: 27). As with 'display', 'centricity' sacrifices something of the active nature of the more literal translation; it also invokes a spatial metaphor that may mislead readers to assume that the "center" in question is the brain, or some particular part of the central nervous system. Neither is intended in Portmann's writing:

No one can localize the inner world, for though we appreciate the central importance of the brain, we know that the inner life as a whole involves the body as a whole. The brain is admittedly a central organ of experience, but how much it is itself governed by the body as a whole is best appreciated by a glance at the modest example of the *Planaria*, a genus of flatworm which is found in river gravel, and which has been the subject of many experiments. If we cut a planarian in half, we find that each part develops into a whole worm: the front acquires a new body, the back organizes itself a new head, complete with brain, eyes, and feelers. (1964: 35).

The internality or centricity of organisms as simple as insects is still sufficiently complicated to lead Portmann

into a consideration of the "self" by which the flatworm's regenerative functions are carried out. At the same time, however, such physiological processes might appear to undermine conventional notions about self and consciousness. As Portmann further ponders the case of the flatworm's ability to regenerate itself, he wonders

what is this "self" which creates a new brain; a brain, what is more, whose function it is to guide the regenerated organism as a whole? It does us good, from time to time, to reflect deeply on such matters, not only because the process of regeneration helps to explain all those healing processes on which our own existence and well-being depend every day of our lives, but above all because it brings us face to face with the secret of the "self" which lies hidden in every single individual, in every separate creature. (1964: 35)

This is not to say that Portmann is extending the concept of consciousness to worms. Rather, consciousness is one mode of centricity; indeed, there is a variety of modes of consciousness itself.<sup>17</sup> Centricity is not a taxonomic

---

<sup>17</sup> Portmann says that psychoanalysis forced biologists to reconsider the concept of an "inner psychic life" among animals, and to acknowledge that evolutionary theory might compel the admission that other organic beings share in varying degrees with humans a form of unconscious activity

specification; it is a condition of organic being as such. *Self, Portmann argues, precedes ego.*

This argument clearly raises the specter of an additional point of convergence with Levinas's views. If, as Levinas claims, moral relationship comes before being (is better than being), might not Portmann's views here be related? The ego, Portmann points out, "is not the builder--the ego is a mere possibility of the 'self'" (1964: 36). Consciousness, the ego--our ontological condition as cognitive beings--is preceded by, or prefigured in, the inner life of metabolic activity which forms the essential structure of centrality. Before ontology (the ego) there is morality (the self). And if conceptualized as "self," then the primal moral condition described by Levinas might accord with Portmann's view that the subjective being-ness of the self must be the focal point of biological study in place of the larger abstractions of genera and species.

---

by which certain metabolic processes are maintained. Whereas Darwinian theory ordinarily extrapolates from studies of animals to the human condition, Portmann begins with what we are most familiar--our own, human subjectivity--and projects that knowledge into his interpretation of animal behavior. As to the argument that he is guilty of anthropomorphic extrapolation, he replies that most biology--and certainly most evolutionary biology--is guilty of zoopomorphic extrapolation. Hence Portmann points out that given that our knowledge of life must involve some form of extrapolation, the question is whether this is to be an extrapolation beginning with the known or the unknown.

Territory is an extension of the animal's self, but not an extension of mere conscious or purposive activity. Territory, it seems, becomes one with the animal's internal, metabolic processes. In addition, territory provides the animal with a sustaining sense of individuality. That is, territory, conceptualized as the product of the animal's centrality at work, enhances the creature's moods by transforming the immediate environment into something familiar. An animal's territory is both a product of meaning and a focal point for the animal's self-expression. Here is one of Portmann's descriptions:

Attachment to a place enhances the individuality of the single animal or animals: the male tit singing in his look-out is recognized from a distance by other tits in the vicinity as a particular bird. The territory thus adds distinguishing marks to those of body and behavior, it becomes a part of the whole individual, also an expression of his capacity for self-assertion. It has its inner side in the bird's experience: he knows his territory exactly, recognizes it again when he returns there. Even the cuckoo, laying her eggs in other birds' nests, is governed by familiarity with her territory: although in choosing the nests of song-birds, she will still, if need be, lay her eggs in any

unfamiliar nest (as many observers have reported)  
rather than go outside the bounds of her territory.  
(1961: 176-77)

How a bird "knows" its territory is difficult for us to imagine. Indeed, the nature of any animal's knowledge is hard to determine. It should be apparent, though, that Portmann's discussion focuses more on experience than on epistemology. It should also be apparent that the relationship between territory and the enhancement of individuality suggests a further relation between internality and security, a connection between the somatic-being of the animal and the semantic-being of its world-constitutive activities. This connection tends to undermine the mind/body dualism of Cartesian philosophy, while introducing into the zoological sciences an appreciation for the relation between well-being (evidenced here as familiarity and security) and space. From the perspective of animal rights activists, this would suggest that caged animals, unable to engage in the process of creating territory, would suffer a continual lack of security and control, and a diminution rather than enhancement of their individuality.

Indeed, this argument could be carried into a variety of directions. It is now widely recognized by health

authorities, for instance, that being in one's home can play a decisive role in recovering from an illness or from medical treatment (McCarron et. al., 1992). We might conceptualize this as a statement about territory, about the human capacity to transform place into space, to domesticate chaos and create a familiar territory in which positive moods are enhanced. Even Portmann does not ignore the obvious connection between the biological concept of territory and the idea of a familiar home:

An inner attachment to this place develops, it becomes a 'home' associated with special values and feelings of familiarity and safety. Home is a place where through peace and security essential moods of every higher animal find most satisfaction. M. Holzapfel has shown the importance of such a home for a crater-spider: if it has caught a fly in its web, its "appetite for home" is greater than its appetite for the prey, and it does not start sucking the fly's blood till it reaches the 'soothing' atmosphere of its favorite haunt. We have seen earlier [in this book] how 'home-like' are sand-wasps' sleeping places. All these examples point to the deliberate satisfaction of a drive, which fosters a positive mood within the animal. (1961: 177)

Being-at-home is a largely under-valued social condition. It is also a largely under-valued condition in the analysis of animal behavior, I would suggest. In the normal course of biological research, the subjective element of the animal's inner world is ignored, with the consequence that overtly mechanistic accounts of animal behavior will generally follow (Smith, 1984). For Portmann, territory is not a map; it is not a description of a bounded geographical area within which the animal feels safe. Indeed, the geographical aspects of an animal's territory are really epiphenomenal, secondary concerns. The geography of the territory is produced by mapping out the range of the animal's movement within a particular place, by giving a heteronomous and objective structure to internal activities. But the animal's space, its subjective interpretation of its self-expressive place in the world is the real issue. If ethics is, as I have argued earlier, a kind of philosophical map-making, then morality is really a question of territorial presence, an organic magnetic field.

### **Animal Rights and the Color of Morality**

One of the more important consequences Portmann's work holds for animal activists is that his emphasis on animal subjectivity can be read as a statement against the claims

of those who would want to see all animals treated alike. Portmann contradicts this perspective with his insistence that our response to animals must be based on the way in which their addressive aspect invites us into a potentially moral relation. Such thinking does not assist those who would advance an animal ethics with its universal code of conduct. Portmann argues that our thinking about animals must begin with an understanding of individuality and individual animal being. Death, he argues, is entirely a function of individuality, for only the individual being can ever perish, its constituent (sub-atomic) parts merely being reassembled into some other physical configuration (1964: 8ff). To speak of animals not as individuals but as members of a species is to deny that their deaths have any meaning at all. Such a denial would be inconsistent with the attempt to accord animals moral consideration.

Moreover, to treat animals alike in an ethical system is to be forced to reduce them to a condition in which their various modes of life are driven through a single filter leaving their differences behind. Universal ethical principles, as I pointed out above, are contingent upon reductionism. The intrinsic value thesis of animal rights thus runs headlong into the biological thesis of intrinsic variability, for it is the differences between animals (as

it is with people) that lead to moral conundrums. Ethics would solve these problems by ignoring the differences. But that which we ignore remains--even if only as an absent referent. To treat animals according to Peter Singer's "new ethics" compels one to accept that it is possible to universalize principles of appropriate conduct.

The directness of the animal Other's appearance is an appealing quality; animal appearance *appeals* to us as a claim on our responsibility--it is both request and command at the same moment. It is the individuality of the Other that commands our attention. Portmann suggests that when we consider the way in which animals appear to us, we must further weigh the quality of our response to these appearances.

Consider the phenomenon of color. As we noted above, color is one of Locke's secondary qualities, coming into existence in the active work of consciousness. It resides, then, in the subjective experience of the perceiver with the result that it has no intrinsic place in the world of physics, where color is measured in terms of wave lengths of light.

Color abounds in nature, Portmann points out, and can be regarded as either "essential" or "nonessential." Essential colors include those aspects of living beings

designed for the definite optical purpose of appearing to others: the color of certain plants, for instance, can be taken as essential in that it attracts insects and thereby helps the plant to survive. As Portmann wryly suggests, such colors can be said to exist "for appearance's sake" (1977: 12).

A plant may have nonessential color appearances as well. For example, the autumnal colors of deciduous trees produced by the dying of cell membranes in the leaves do not serve a preservative function. They can be called nonessential, therefore, in that they do not appear for the sake of aiding the organism in any obvious fashion. But, of course, the brilliance of autumn foliage is rarely lost on the human observer. As Portmann writes:

Thus, nonessential appearances such as autumn foliage or the color of the sky and clouds become "essential" ones for us; they become bearers of roles in our experiencing of the world, or sometimes even symbols of those hidden workings of nature that seem all the more intrinsic to us in their very concealment. (1977: 12)

Portmann suggests that the so-called essential appearances of organic being are pre-defined by an ideological disposition entrenched in conventional biology. That is, biologists are so accustomed to reducing appearance

to constituent elements of self-preservative value, that the putatively nonessential appearances are "all too often regarded as 'merely taxonomic', as having a purely 'systematic value', at best a means of naming plants and animals and not good for much else" (Portmann, 1977: 13). This conventional biological ethos, inherited largely from Darwinian theory, eschews interest in that which does not appear to serve a functional role in preservation. And, as Portmann indicates, this emphasis on the preservation value of appearances misses entirely the overwhelming reality of so-called nonessential appearances. Whereas selection theory seeks out specific appearances and colors by which it can explain the manner in which a specific plant or animal might enhance its chances for survival and propagation, it largely ignores the source of those essential appearances.

Perhaps more importantly, Portmann indicates in this passage as well that the autumn foliage becomes essential "for us." We are capable of responding to what science defines as non-essential in a fashion that suggests the phenomenon's signification precisely because our lives exceed the narrow confines of natural selection. To borrow from Levinas, it is as if there is a 'saying' in the autumnal foliage that is lost when thematized as a 'said'. This saying stands outside of discourse, is not reducible to

an object, and is ultimately lost in being pronounced as said. Is it important that the autumnal foliage is, from a rational viewpoint, unaware of its address? Does it matter that animals do not share with us a form of consciousness that permits them in every case to thematize their communication? If the obligation rests with me, with my perception of the call for responsibility (for the animal, for a stand of trees, for the earth), how is my obligation affected by the Other's status as species? Indeed, why would I choose to make such a determination?

We are creatures capable of transforming the non-essential into the essential, creatures with the capacity to respond to Others regardless of that Other's worldly status. In Uexküll's way of speaking, one might suggest that autumn foliage, or the visage of the animal Other touching our moral sensibility, is a perfectly reasonable way of experiencing the contrapuntal composition of nature. Each element plays its part in a unified celebration of life.

Animal-being is not simply for the sake of being; appearance suggests an additional dimension (or mode of relating) which mocks our conventional devotion to functional explanations--where the notion of functionality is defined in the utilitarian manner favored in evolutionary biology. As Portmann says:

Let it be stressed again that the mind of the human organism indeed comprises and recognizes a kind of appearance directed toward immediate utility and life-contingencies, but that the narrowness of this category is continually being overcome by the freedom, the magnificent "randomness", of our interests. (1977: 16)<sup>18</sup>

Color is often indeed a discernible factor for survival, an essential mode of being. But it also can be a way of appearing in the world by which being expresses its self as individuality. And this expression of individual subjectivity is conditioned by the internality of living being. Hence centrality, the metaphysical facet of organic existence, both constitutes and animates the world.

---

<sup>18</sup> Although this passage speaks of the *human* organism's orientation to the world as being attuned to aspects of natural phenomena that "overcome" strictly utilitarian considerations, Portmann also argues that a similar tendency can be discerned in the behavior of chimpanzees. He points out that the chimpanzee's tendency to "deliberate" before opting for a course of action suggests that the evolution of so-called higher mental faculties rests in part on the development of uncertainty. That is, among mammals at least, the certainty of instinct is replaced by the uncertainty of intellect, a suggestion that also coincides with Darwin's views of moral evolution discussed previously. Moreover, given the uncertainty in which the moral sense is embedded, the idea that the moral impulse is transformed by the "higher" ethical imperative to legislate behavior mirrors the development of moral compassion and its absorption into ethical calculation--the territory, we might say, becomes the map.

In addition, centricity, I would suggest, is a condition of nascent morality, embedded in the corporeality of the individual being. I have already hinted at this possibility in the observation that the addressive aspect of appearance compels an incipient form of moral response, one that can be compared to the originary moral stance outlined in Levinas's concept of face. Organic being, when considered in light of Portmann's insistence on centricity, assumes a more individualistic character than is found normally in biological research. Centricity is not a species-specific trait, but a quality of subjectivity as such. In whatever fashion taxonomic systems might classify them, animals only exist as individuals.

Portmann's emphasis on the individual being, and his occasionally dismissive remarks about the role of taxonomy, certainly leaves him open to the charge of over-generalizing the role of individual variation at the expense of species-specific modes of behavior. The main reasons for his taking this approach, as I have tried to indicate, stem from his concern that we are too inclined to focus our attention on survival questions (which he associates with matters of species membership) and leave aside our interest with the expressive or addressive aspects of life (which he considers to lie in the province of the individual being). He is

particularly concerned on this point as it evinces political ideas with which he is not in sympathy. Thus he writes:

There is a totalitarian view, for which the individual has value only as a member of society, is 'expendable' and replaceable at any time if society requires it; whereas for the other view the individual, though a natural member of society, has on his own account an irreplaceable value, with rights which society must respect and foster as far as possible (since society's real aim is the production of 'better' individuals).

Both views recognise that society's achievements go beyond the sum of achievements which would be possible for individuals on their own; but for the former the great society--the state, the collective, or whatever it may be--becomes an end in itself, to which mere individuals may be sacrificed without scruple; while for the latter view society's end is to improve the conditions of life and possibilities of self-fulfillment for all the individuals who make it up.

(Portmann, 1967: 173-74)

This view reflects our earlier discussion of the differences between ethics and morality. In stressing the primacy of the individual--or the individual's primacy insofar as the individual must not be seen only as a functional unit of the

collectivity--Portmann suggests a position that accords with Levinas's ideas on the primary moral condition. It is interesting to note that just as Levinas argues strongly against the dispensability of the individual as a moral subject, so too Portmann in the above passage suggests that there is some danger in conceptualizing the animal individual as a replaceable segment serving the larger interests of the species. As Levinas has said, "my responsibility is untransferable, no one could replace me.... I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me" (Levinas, 1985: 100, 101). The emphasis in Portmann's zoological arguments on the animal Other as an individual capable of self-expression, thus resonate with the kind of moral position I have sketched out earlier. To think in terms of the ethical at the expense of the moral, is thus to commit oneself to a kind of ethical abstraction in which individual beings do not necessarily figure.

The centrality of animals, their subjective essence as displayed-for the Other in carnate form, speaks of life's inherent vulnerability, its precarious hold as organic structure. In life *per se* the conditions of moral being are prefigured. And in the elementary substrates of life as

organic being, the essential character of the vulnerable Other is made manifest. As Jonas writes:

Living substance, by some original act of segregation, has taken itself out of the general integration of things in the physical context, set itself over against the world, and introduced the tension of "to be or not to be" into the neutral assuredness of existence. It did so by assuming a position of hazardous independence from the very matter which is yet indispensable to its being: by divorcing its own identity from that of its temporary stuff, through which it is yet part of the common physical world. So poised, the organism has its being on condition and revocable.... So constitutive for life is the possibility of not-being that its very being is essentially a hovering over this abyss, a skirting of its brink: thus being itself has become a constant possibility rather than a given state, ever anew to be laid hold of in opposition to its ever-present contrary, not-being, which will inevitably engulf it in the end. (1966: 4)

Life is relationship, a tenuous balancing of essential polarities--self and other, form and matter, freedom and necessity, being and not-being. Centricity is an expression of this tension, of life's "hazardous independence".

Echoing Jonas's arguments, Portmann says that "higher life is not only a richer form of life but also a much more precarious form of life" (1964: 155). Independence is a dangerous and uncertain freedom. The to-and-fro dynamic of life's essential structure is a kind of play or dialogue in which one reaches continually for the other (Gadamer, 1975). Thus centrality grounds the individuality of the subject in the physical domain of the body even as it gives rise to the impulse by which the self reaches toward the Other. As Grene puts it, centrality reveals that

organisms are centers of metabolism and development, of ordered reaching out toward an environment and taking in from it, of birth and death. It is this centered dynamic, dependent as it is on the existence of *individuals*, that is characteristic of all life and is not characteristic of inorganic phenomena. (1968: 29-30).

Individuals are maintained by metabolic processes, Portmann points out matter of factly, but in the majority of biology texts one might glean the impression that it is the creature's function to exist for the sake of its metabolism. Individuality is a condition of life *per se*, predicated on the essential dependency of being. This dependency is a question of relation; as such, it offers a point of

comparison with the views regarding morality I have been sketching.

For instance, if, as Portmann argues, our analysis of life must move beyond the overtly functional methodology of neo-Darwinian theory to adopt a more dynamic and relational perspective, then we might further suggest that the rudiments of the moral sense are, as Darwin suggested, immanent (or prefigured) in the essential structure of living being. Human moral capacity, then, though remarkably different from the nascent moral prefigurement observed in animals, is predicated on a fundamental sense of sympathetic connection. Indeed, this connection, as Portmann claims, is itself an essential aspect of living being. Just as Levinas claims that morality is better than being, so too Portmann challenges the mainly functionalist inclination of biological analysis:

We have seen [in this book] that organic life is characterized not only by survival mechanisms but also by what we have called unaddressed [nonessential] phenomena, *i.e.* by phenomena that cannot possibly have any kind of survival value. We have therefore argued that the germ is provided not only with survival structures, but also with phenomenal structures whose importance and number are at least as great. *Indeed,*

*it is quite possible that self-expression involves structures whose complexity transcends that of survival mechanisms. In either case, such structures are not occasional exaggerations, but the fulfillment of an important demand of life. An examination of our own existence leads to a similar conclusion: our actions often go far beyond the demands of mere survival.*

(1964: 150-151, my italics)

The italicized segment in this citation is, I suggest, of special significance in assessing the connections between Portmann's and Levinas's mutual projects. If morality is coded in the elemental constituents of living being, then arguments concerning moral consideration which derive from the construction of logical arguments are moot. The issue is not one of determining which beings (or individuals) are legitimate members of a "moral community"; rather, the point is that all life is linked by a selfsame impulse toward self-expression and responsibility, and not toward mere self-preservation.

Morality also can be conceptualized as one of the "mysteries" of organic being of which Portmann speaks, for its unconditioned character clearly exceeds scientific

determination.<sup>19</sup> A program for a rational animal ethics is really an effort at unraveling this mystery--indeed, it is perhaps more correct to say that ethical systems are, in effect, techniques for legislating mysteries out of existence. Ethics is an explanation of appropriate conduct, whereas morality is a response to one of the fundamental impulses of life.

Hence I would suggest that animals, as individual beings, as bearers of a centered subjectivity, are deserving recipients of our moral compassion. However, this cannot be taken as a normative claim. Rather, I would be more inclined to posit that one can be justified in acknowledging feelings of obligation to the animal Other on the basis that these impulses toward responsibility can be trusted and should not be repudiated. In other words, when Descartes argued that the feelings of guilt that follow from mistreating animals should be absolved in the explanatory

---

<sup>19</sup> Compare this observation to Levinas's comment that "the other as other is not an object bound to become mine or become me; it retreats on the contrary into its mystery" (cited in Bauman, 1993: 93). The self-sufficiency of the "mysterious" as an explanation would hardly satisfy in science, yet in the present context it captures something of that paradoxical frame of reference in which matters of moral being are contained. To defeat the other's mystery, to overcome even with love the hidden aspect by which the other maintains itself, is to do violence to the other and destroy the sympathetic union in which the moral relation is configured.

framework of animal automatism, he simultaneously acknowledged that animals may, in specific circumstance, have a claim on our consciences. There is nothing radical, then, in facing this guilt, or in confessing its persuasive power. What is radical, perhaps, is conceding that it may constitute (under some circumstances) a genuinely moral relation with an animal Other. But this is only radical in that it stands in contrast to conventional wisdom in Western thought. To value compassion for animals independently of other motives (the greater interests of commerce, for instance), is to challenge the fundamental idea that moral regard should be rooted in rational deliberation.

Moreover, what forms our compassion might take is an enormous difficulty. Following Portmann we might suggest that immoral conduct towards animals would occur whenever the animal's individuality is compromised, and its capacity for world-constitution thwarted. Yet in circumstances in which an animal is clearly in distress, it would be necessary to violate these conditions if we are to offer appropriate assistance. We see quickly, then, that the view of morality that Levinas offers is not intended to provide us with textbook style prescriptions for being good. However committed I may be to the ethical treatment of

animals, the prospect of immoral conduct on my part always remains. In Bauman's somewhat distressing analysis:

What makes the moral self is the urge to do, not the knowledge of what is to be done; the unfulfilled task, not the duty correctly performed. "But it all adds up to the fact that a person can never be entirely sure that he has acted in the right manner," concludes Løgstrup. Indeed. This uncertainty with no exit is precisely the foundation of morality. One recognizes morality by its gnawing sense of unfulfilledness, by its endemic dissatisfaction with itself. *The moral self is a self always haunted by the suspicion that it is not moral enough.* (1993: 80)

But for all its endemic ambivalence, its infinite demand on our personal obligation, the moral imperative will lead us, eventually if not inevitably, into a world of discursive relations where common purposes are diligently pursued. An ethical system, such as that proposed by Peter Singer, would make our moral obligations to animals vanish behind the formulae of utilitarian calculations. It would also release us from our responsibility for the animal Other by elevating ethical reasoning over and above the moral impulse.

I have put forward the idea that the moral impulse is produced in our animal nature, and that our sense of moral obligation, therefore, proceeds from our animal heritage described in evolutionary theory. It is not that our evolutionary connection to animals places specific obligations upon us, as Henry Salt argued, but that we have never ceased being animals. With Levinas, I would suggest that the break with pure being signals the arrival of the Other as face; but with Portmann, I would further propose that the animal Other who confronts us bears a familiarity that bespeaks not a common, abstract historical bond, but an immediate sympathetic touch rooted in the common experience of living being, a pre-original beyond.<sup>20</sup>

Where Darwin saw the moral sense as serving the interests of species survival, Portmann's analysis would urge us to see morality as transcending the dictate of mere survival. In the Darwinian scheme, survival has value as

---

<sup>20</sup> The idea that the moral relation is a "touching" is a common metaphor in Levinas's philosophy which has been developed by a number of writers. A particularly forceful expression of this can be found in the work of John Caputo, who writes:

Obligation is a relation of flesh to flesh, a transubstantiation in which the flesh of the Other transforms my body into flesh. Under the touch of the Other the I becomes flesh... Touched by the flesh of the one who suffers, the I becomes flesh and is (re)incarnated--as one who is a little "touched," a bit of a fool, a little mad (for justice). (1993: 217)

both means and ends. Each aspect of animate behavior survives so long as it has survival value; survival thereby becomes the way by which organisms achieve their ultimate goal: survival. Portmann seeks to break free of this vertiginous tautology. The self-expressing individual being is only possible in its relation to a world of others. In this sense, the moral condition of human being is prefigured in the organic possibilities of animal life.

I am aware that this reading of a moral relation in the appeal of animal addressiveness denies the primacy of a human-centered definition of obligation. And yet, the idea that only other people can place us under obligations of any kind is the sort of metaphysical supposition for which support may be difficult to find. Hans Jonas captures something of this spirit when he writes that

the contention--almost axiomatic in the modern climate of thought--that something like an "ought" can issue only from man and is alien to everything outside him, is more than a descriptive statement: it is part of a metaphysical position, which has never given full account of itself. To ask for such an account is to reopen the ontological question of human within total existence. Ontology may yet relocate the foundation of "ought" from the ego of man, to which it has been

relegated, to the nature of being in general. It may have been premature despair which denied the doctrine of being the power to yield a ground of obligation--for beings, of course, that are pervious to obligation, and who must be there so that obligation can find its respondent. (1966: 283)

*Pervious to obligation.* This is an apt phrase, for that which is pervious is simultaneously that which is open (in Portmann's sense of world openness) and vulnerable (in Levinas's sense of the Other as suffering). The unspoken demand, the face of the Other, the animal's addressive self-expression--each of these penetrates the pervious field of care to touch us (metaphorically, literally). We are pervious to obligation because we are pervious to the suffering of the Other, and open to the demands that the Other may make upon us.

## CONCLUSION: READING THE OBLIGER

Would it not be better to stop with faith, and is it not revolting that everybody wants to go further?

- Søren Kierkegaard

We inevitably produce new evils in trying to solve existing ones. But that is no excuse not to act, not to do whatever we can. The imperative to act, the power of obligation, is urgent, incessant. Obligation never stops happening. It cannot be bracketed or suspended. The chords of obligation keep playing in the background.

- John Caputo

Shall we conceive of the world around us and of ourselves in it as *personal*, a meaningful whole, honoring its order as continuous with the moral law of our own being and its being as continuous with ours, bearing its goodness--or shall we conceive of it and treat it, together with ourselves, as *impersonal*, a chance aggregate of matter propelled by a blind force and exhibiting at most the ontologically random lawlike regularities of a causal order? Is the Person or is matter in motion the root metaphor of thought and practice? That answered, all else follows.

- Erazim Kohák

TAMPA, Fla.--A cat saved all its nine lives by calling 911. The nine-week-old gray and white kitten screeched for help in a telephone call Wednesday to dispatcher Elena Arroyo at the Hillsborough County sheriff's office, north of Tampa, Fla. The kitten was choking on its flea collar, which got caught in his mouth. It then knocked a phone off a table and hit a speed dial button programmed for 911.

The call was traced to a mobile Home Park, where a deputy sheriff and a gardener found the cat and rescued it. *Newsday*, July 12, 1996.

### The Primacy of the Moral Relation

There is that about the Other that is an enigma, Levinas says, an irreducible alterity which, in being resistant to thematization, is the Other's voice, pleading for my compassion. This mystery of the Other, Levinas further indicates, is its singularity. "The only way for another to come to the fore is to confront me with the

nudity, i.e., the nonuniversality, of her face" (Peperzak, 1997: 52). In Levinas's words, when I confront the Other, "I have neglected the universal being that he incarnates in order to remain with the particular being he is" (1951: 7). The mystery of the Other is that she is Other, that she remains so, and that I am responsible for her. It is also this responsibility, he says, that makes me irreplaceable, that makes me unique. In accepting alterity on its terms, and by refusing to treat everyone as representatives of a larger entity called 'human being,' the moral relation begins.

When we turn to animals it is far more troublesome to think of our relations with other creatures as being framed according to this one-to-one structure. It is difficult not to think that a cat is a cat, and that *this* cat seeking my attention is more than (or beyond being) a temporary token of cat-ness. It is as if there a great unwillingness on my part to resist my egology, to push aside the temptation at thematizing the animal Other. It almost seems that if I permit the animal Other to confront me in her nakedness without a move toward thematization then I have shown myself also to be an animal.

Perhaps this notion is what stands in the way of Levinas accepting that Bobby (the dog of the prison labor

camp essay) is more than a being whose intentions are focussed on "vitality" and survival. In a powerful critique of Levinas's thinking on this matter, David Clark has written:

The dog's declared moral status as a kind of animal-robot is strikingly at odds with the richly evocative details of his encounter with the prisoners, details which invite us--albeit against the grain of Levinas's anthropocentrism--to think *otherwise* about the nature of responding and responsibility, and thus to unsettle the oppositional limit that would confine what are confusedly called "language," "rationality," and "ethics" solely to the human sphere.... For what is Bobby doing when, by Levinas's own moving account, he so gaily greets the prisoners and recognizes them as "other," that is, as "men"? More: what is language if it is not the wagging of a tail, and "ethics" if it is not the ability to greet one another and to dwell as others? (1997: 190)

There is an enigmatic character to Bobby that is hidden in his animality. Bobby is excessive, his wagging tail telling more than what is explained in biology. Indeed, to even accept, as Levinas does in his account of Bobby, that a dog can acknowledge the prisoners as men is to recognize in the

animal's gaze an inner nature, independent of speech, that confirms (or denies) one's subjectivity. And in this moment the gap between Bobby and Levinas is closed; a responding has taken place. Once again, Clark writes:

Notwithstanding Levinas's desire to say "no" to the animal, Bobby's face cannot be entirely refused, not because there is something residually "human" or "prehuman" about it, but precisely because of its nonhuman excess, because that face, screened though it is through Levinas's axiomatic discourse, constitutes a "yes" that is not a "yes," a "yes" belonging uniquely to the animal, to this animal, and given freely to the human prisoners. It goes without saying that "gift" and "freedom," like "animal" and "human," are all figures put in question by the call of this enigmatic communication, always before us and beyond us. (1997: 191)

Levinas suggests that in his muteness, Bobby possesses no face--or, as he says in other places, Bobby has a face, but a face that can be partially refused. I have already suggested that this move to partiality is problematic insofar as it evinces a *post hoc* quality. In saying that we cannot entirely refuse the animal's face, does he mean that we must always take the animal's face into account

partially? Or does he mean that there are particular times where the animal's face can be refused utterly? In fact, I believe, neither answer is satisfactory, for the absoluteness of the face, and the infinity of the responsibility it impels, are incompatible with this move to partiality. Ultimately, Levinas's notion of animal face must be taken itself at face value: Animals have a face, but it is a face which we may choose to refuse.

This suggests that animals are moral beings because they are Others whose lives are, in ways that might remain mysterious to us, meaningful. As he looks at animals and their myriad modes of self-expression, Portmann asks "how shall we name the thing that we suspect to be beyond what can be expressed in words? What is that hidden thing to be called which cannot be discovered by scientific means?" (1967: 220). His answer is rather remarkable given his position as a zoologist:

The inner experience to the gates of which scientific research into animal form should ultimately lead us, is therefore not that delight experienced by an active person as he solves problems, a feeling which accompanies any scientific work. But, rather, we are also regarding the animal with a strong emotion, in which there is something of the astonishment of a child

at work; we regard plants and animals with amazement or horror, with joy, but also with awe. (1967: 220)

We will never fully understand animals from a scientific vantage point, Portmann goes on to say, for there is that about animals that will forever elude the grasp of scientific knowledge. The inner life of the animal Other is a mystery, an enigma, something with the power to astonish even as it resists thematization. Their lives have meaning, whether as melodies in Uexküll's symphony, or in the self-expression Portmann sees as taking them beyond the everyday banality of being.

A similar view appears in the work of the philosopher Erazim Kohák, who extends the notion of meaning to encompass moral value, thereby discovering an intrinsic moral order in nature. As Kohák has written:

The sense of nature includes also a dimension of value, not merely as utility but as intrinsic, absolute value ingressing in the order of time. The chipmunk peering out of the stone fence is not reducible simply to the role he fulfills in the economy of nature. There is not only utility but also an integrity, a rightness to his presence. (1984: 70)

The urge to reach out to the Other, Darwin suggested, can be regarded as an indispensable aspect of species-being.

It is from this perspective that one could claim that our initial sense of communion with the animal Other is itself a moral relation, that the immediacy of our connection with other-than-human-being is grounded in moral regard. Thus Kohák writes:

Our relation to nature--be it to our fellow humans, to the furry inhabitants of the forest, or to its trees and boulders--is first of all a moral relation, governed by a moral law. Only secondarily, within that moral matrix, can we designate nature also in terms of utility or in terms of sheer being. (1984: 195)

Kohák, with Levinas, sees the moral relation as primary, and extends this relation into the world of animals as well as the social realm of human beings. For Kohák, as for Levinas, is from the dimension of moral relation that other categories of relating derive; thus Kohák too sees morality as a first philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Kohák's overall philosophical position is a variant of personalism, a perspective that regards the Person as the ultimate metaphysical category. The relevance of personalism to this project is minor, and I do not deal with the relation between personalism and Levinas's moral philosophy here at any length. However, I do want to acknowledge that some overlap is evident. John Caputo's interpretation of Levinas, for instance, is charged with personalist language as the following passage makes clear:

By a person I do not mean an autonomous metaphysical subject but a subject of obligation, something that makes demands on me, that asks for a hand, for the flesh of my hand. A person is a place where

One of the main difficulties we have in feeling the pull of moral responsibility for animals lies in the fact that we are strongly influenced by the Cartesian image of the beast-machine. This image continues to draw support from certain philosophical circles, but perhaps is entrenched most firmly in the practice of using animals for scientific and medical research. The phrase "factory farming" certainly suggests how ideas drawn from the mechanical philosophy continue to influence our everyday thinking about animals, reducing them to mechanical components one might imagine as being moved along conveyer belts. The image, of course, is not far from reality. In Siegfried Giedion's monumental tome, Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History, we read:

In one of the great packing plants, an average of two animals are killed every second--a quota of some 60,000 head. The death cries of the animals whose jugular

---

obligations happen, where 'someone' says 'I' to 'me,' where 'you' call upon 'me,' where 'they' call upon 'me' or 'us.' A person is a place where the eyes of the other come over me, overtake me, pulling me up short. From obligations a whole network of interpersonal relations springs up; in persons a whole network of obligations takes root. (1993: 238)

Hence the value of bringing Kohák's personalist position to bear on Levinas's views is that each concerns himself with matters of obligation, and the way in which the Person, however that notion is cashed out, is the source of moral responsibility. Persons, I would suggest, are those things for whom/which obligations may be felt.

veins have been opened are confused with the rumbling of the great drum, the whirring of gears, and the shrilling sound of steam. Death cries and mechanical noises are almost impossible to disentangle. Neither can the eye quite take in what it sees. On one side of the sticker are the living; on the other side, the slaughtered. Each animal hangs head downwards at the same regular interval, except that, from the creatures to his right, blood is spurting out of the neck-wound in the tempo of the heart beat. In twenty seconds, on the average, a hog is supposed to have bled to death. It happens so quickly, and is so smooth a part of the production process, that emotion is barely stirred.

Such accounts generally are distressing to read, but my intention is not to shock readers by bringing forward images that many people would prefer to ignore. Rather, I want to point out that the way in which animals become indistinguishable from the technologies of slaughter, and how their cries of suffering merge with the groaning of the machinery of commerce, tells us something about contemporary appropriations of Descartes's animal machine. It is a telling metaphor--though a rather indelicate one--suggesting the centrality of the death of nature in the satisfaction of human needs. It also indicates something of the way in

which animals, with their cries being confused with the sounds of machines, become machine-like themselves, reduced to a part of the production process. Emotion is barely stirred, Giedion writes, indicating further the role that such forms of mechanization play in blunting our natural sympathies for Others in distress. Giedion goes on to write:

Has this neutrality toward death had any further effect upon us? This broader influence does not have to appear in the land that evolved mechanized killing, or even at the time the methods came about. This neutrality toward death may be lodged deep in the roots of our time. It did not bare itself on a large scale until the War, when whole populations, as defenseless as the animals hooked head downwards on the traveling chain, were obliterated with trained neutrality.

(1948: 246).

"Trained neutrality", as Giedion calls it, is indifference to suffering, a prerequisite for the techniques necessary for mechanized death. It can also serve as a precondition, Giedion surmises, for greater acts of moral indifference in respect to human relations. Just as Montaigne's comments concerning the gladiatorial games of the Romans suggested that insensitivity to the suffering of animals can

predispose a community to express a callous disregard for the pain of other people, so too Giedion speculates a similar connection exists in this century.<sup>2</sup> Factory farming thus suggests to Giedion a kind of institutionalized process for the deadening of the moral sense.

So too the phrase "animal model", which is commonly used in scientific and medical research, suggests how an instrumentalist attitude finds the doctrine of mechanism a congenial climate in which to thrive. In regarding animals as mere tools, medical and scientific research accepts implicitly the Cartesian dualism of body and mind. This is because research using animal models draws its justification from the juxtaposition of two contrasting views of our connection to other creatures: our somatic similarities, and our metaphysical (or spiritual) differences. In the first case, scientific and medical experimentation on animals is justified scientifically (and instrumentally) by virtue of the fact that animals and humans are closely related biological beings. Similarity is thus an important consideration for the way in which animals are regarded as

---

<sup>2</sup> In a provocative and controversial statement, Heidegger has said that what occurs in a "motorized food industry" is "in essence the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and the extermination camps" (1977: 15). His point would seem to be that life--or Being--is treated in both instances as raw material, reduced to the mere physicality of soma.

organically constituted machines. It is only in being like us heteromorphically that animals can have this sort of instrumental value.

Second, research on animals is justified ethically on the basis that people and animals are distinct spiritual beings. That is, the differences between people and animals are an important part of the ethical rationale for using animal models. The way in which animals differ from us heteronomically is employed further in the instrumental reasoning that makes mechanized death and scientific research ethically permissible. Thus the Cartesian doctrine of animal automatism has successfully negotiated the problem of moral value by divesting animals of a spiritual aspect: animals are sufficiently like us somatically, but sufficiently unlike us spiritually, to make animal research both valuable (scientifically) and justified (ethically). Moral value is given only a human face.

I cannot help but wonder--as Descartes himself wondered--whether such reasoning is valid, whether animal automatism is an empirically sound idea or merely a tool for alleviating guilt (see Chapter Three). After all, what is gained with the machine metaphor, and what is lost? "A robot can say words," James Carse writes, "but cannot say them to you" (1986: 81). A machine may represent

intentions, but it cannot make them manifest; we do not feel the moral immediacy of the machine's suffering.<sup>3</sup> When we regard the Other as a machine, as a thing incapable of address, then we have shut ourselves off to the possibility of moral attunement.<sup>4</sup> To be open to the Other--to be

---

<sup>3</sup> It is worth recalling for the moment Uexküll's mode of distinguishing between animals and machines as the difference between a centripetal (machine) and centrifugal (organism) design structure (see Chapter Five). In the case of the machine, there is no inwardness, to use Portmann's phrase, no immanent capacity to generate self-reflective understanding. Suffering, Uexküll might suggest, is constituted only centrifugally. Hence we might *respond* to James Carse's robot (in the sense of a stimulus-response model), but we would be unlikely to sense that the robot's utterance was the outward manifestation of any form of inner experience.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Wilson writes:

People react more quickly and fully to organisms than to machines. They will walk into nature, to explore, hunt, and garden, if given the chance. They prefer entities that are complicated, growing, and sufficiently unpredictable to be interesting. They are inclined to treat their most formidable contraptions as living things or at least to adorn them with eagles, floral friezes, and other emblems representative of the peculiar human perception of true life. The ultimate machine of the futurist's imagination is a self-replicating robot that is benignly independent of its creators, hence in key respects quasi-alive.

Mechanophilia, the love of machines, is but a special case of biophilia [the love of life]. (1984: 116)

The so-called "biophilia" hypothesis which was first discussed by Edward Wilson (1984) and subsequently discussed in an anthology edited by Wilson and Kellert (1993), shows some intriguing parallels to several of the views on moral relations developed by Levinas and Kohák, but I have not considered these ideas in any detail in this essay. Readers interested in the notion of "mechanophilia" should consult these two volumes. A different approach to the theme from a postmodern, feminist position can also be found in Haraway (1991).

pervious, as Jonas (1966: 283) says--we must accept the manner in which the other presents him/herself to us. Openness is a willingness to see oneself as formed in relation to the Other; with Levinas, we might even say that openness is a willingness to regard oneself as formed in relation *for* the Other. We must first accept the other's vulnerability as a call to responsibility in order that our own vulnerability to obligation might make us whole.

But the mechanism inherent in the Cartesian view of animals makes it impossible to accept that animals have qualities other than those inscribed determinantly in their bodies. The mechanist's account of animals secures technical efficiency, but at the cost of devaluing the feeling of connection that can draw us into concern for other beings. As Matthew Fox has written:

Under the perceived threat of disease, suffering, death, and loss of our loved ones, we devalue the lives of animals, violating the sanctity of life by valuing our own kind over our fellow creatures.

This attitude of mind fears death and suffering and, by objectifying certain other sentient fellow beings, human or nonhuman as the case may be, becomes empathically disconnected from them and sees them as

being inferior, less important than they are. (1996:  
43)

Fox links empathic disconnection to the practice of moral devaluation. Hence the efficiency of mechanism is purchased at the cost of moral value. Our empathic disconnection from animals, though it permits us to think about them as objects (and thus to be technically efficient in practices like scientific analysis), tends also to limit our appreciation of the animal Other as a being warranting moral concern. Empathy, one might suggest, militates against technical efficiency.

### **The Morality of Flesh**

I believe this matter of empathic disconnection to be an important point, though one that is often overlooked by animal activists. It is only in the empathic connection for the Other that the moral relation is possible, and when that link is severed--as it is in mechanism--then the Other ceases to be a locus of moral value. But empathic connection must reach across the space separating individual bodies, for the moral relation, I would propose, is that relation that links flesh to flesh. The other must be a body, an incarnate Other, in order for empathic connection

to flourish.<sup>5</sup> Flesh is both real and metaphoric, the concern of *concrete ethics* (Furrow, 1995), and a symbol of obligation. Reflecting on this possibility, John Caputo writes:

Flesh is...not the *principium* of a species, not a natural kind, not species-specific, and it is certainly not the private property of human beings. The several species are a function of their organic bodies, of the organization of flesh into natural kinds. Flesh is flesh in human and nonhuman beings, wherever there is *zoe*. It is in virtue of flesh that the differences among the species are melted down. We also speak of the flesh of a plant, the soft pulp of a fruit or vegetable, thus further skewing the identity of flesh, thus further disseminating flesh. A chain saw tearing through the trunk of a hundred-year-old redwood tree is

---

<sup>5</sup> Adriaan Peperzak's reading of Levinas emphasizes this point as well. He writes:

Oriented by the desire that directs me to the Other, and thus by the Other that I cannot assimilate, I am a human body of flesh and blood, simultaneously independent and pertaining to the Other. Only on the basis of this fact--but not as the most basic truth--can a human being be defined as a "living being that is reasonable" or as a "unity of body and spiritual soul." The whole of my concrete--corporeal, sensible, kinetic, emotional, contemplative, striving--existence is determined by my orientation toward the Other: I am demanded, disposed, obsessed, and inspired. (1993: 25-26)

tearing through the flesh of the tree, its living pulp. The flesh of marine life choking to death in waters poisoned by oil and toxic chemicals is no less flesh than human flesh. The flesh of elephants cut down in rapidly disappearing habitats, of animals dying in scientific laboratories--all of that and more is flesh, dying, wounded, damaged, diseased, suffering flesh. The disappearance and destruction of species in which the modern world is engaged is an undoing of flesh and of its heteromorphic possibilities. (1993: 210)

The usefulness of mechanism is that when it reaches out to flesh it detects only substance, merely the resistance of inert material stretched over bone and tendon. This is useful both for technical efficiency and for pushing moral questions to the margins. It is useful in making moral obligation secondary to instrumentality.<sup>6</sup> But it is also a

---

<sup>6</sup> In Kohák's words:

we have substituted houses for homes, the material embodiment for the meaningful reality, because objects make no demands while meaningful beings do. I can, without a pang of guilt or regret, neglect a house, though not a home. Objects, however, also give nothing. We end up, hollow men in a wasteland, urgently needing to rediscover that matter is not reality. (1984: 203).

The urgency of Kohák's plea stands at some distance from Descartes's delight in having removed animals from the sphere of the animate and thereby eliminated our reasons for feeling guilt over their mistreatment, or concern that their earthly suffering might not be adequately rewarded with spiritual salvation. Where Descartes sought to de-animate

denial of life *per se*, a denial of the call that the living creature issues in its suffering.

Obligations happen [Caputo says] in and with and as flesh. Obligations are events interwoven with the texture, with the tissue of flesh. Obligation clings to flesh--like an odor or a scar or an indelible stain. (1993: 196).

The flesh of the Other, the face of the Other: perhaps these are both hyperboles, distortions of what actually is encountered in the approach to the Other? After all, my cat has no human face, and even her flesh is rarely touched through the fullness of her fur. And yet it is her flesh I feel in caressing her, her face I see when she appeals for affection. Her flesh is her *difference*, her absolute alterity. Her flesh is that which separates her from me, renders her a mystery to my understanding. Her flesh makes her *one and the Other*, and yet it is this flesh that bridges the abyss of alterity, that makes her a project for my moral

---

nature, it is Kohák's task to re-animate it, so that we might conceptualize our relations to other creatures as though they were personal relations. It is as if the point of moral reflection, as Kohák undertakes it in his work, is to undo the apparent simplicity introduced by mechanistic modes of reasoning. Moral consideration is an ambivalent and uncertain affair, whereas mechanism prides itself on having rendered ambivalence a consequence of poor reasoning, especially in the Cartesian scheme.

attunement. In my being-for her, the moral relation establishes empathic connection, affective connaturality, a sense of kinship. Empathic connection thus becomes obligation; is connected to obligation; is indistinguishable from obligation. The care of the flesh of the Other is always and infinitely my responsibility. As Dwight Furrow writes:

This relation of self and Other is neither a union of two separate entities nor a separation between two previously joined entities. Contact is not secured by what is shared nor by some process of mediation that links separate entities despite their differences. It is otherness itself, the absolute difference between the self and Other that links self and Other.

The Other is what I myself am not; it is precisely this not-being-me that secures my relation with the Other.

(1995: 144)

In animal experimentation it the animal Other's alterity that justifies it being used as a component in the experimental setting, as merely a piece of the technical apparatus necessary to advance knowledge. But in my appropriation of Levinas's philosophy, precisely the opposite interpretation holds, for here it is the alterity of the animal--its heteronomic and heteromorphic difference-

-that makes it a site of moral value. In the legacy of Cartesian mechanism, difference is the excuse for moral disregard; in the interpretation of Levinas I am suggesting here, it is difference that cannot excuse moral disregard.

Of course, this does not mean that we can deny the materiality of the animal Other; but we can question to what extent the mechanist's account of that material substrate paints an adequate picture. As Hans Jonas tells us, when we explain life by non-life--that is, when we explain living being in terms of non-living chemical and cellular organization--we have really explained nothing about life at all. "To reduce life to the lifeless," he writes,

is nothing else than to resolve the particular into the general, the complex into the simple, and the apparent exception into the accepted rule. (1966: 11)

Moreover, as Kenneth Burke has argued, although we might attempt to explain the complex in terms of the simple, "the simple is precisely what the complex is not" (Burke, 1957). In the ethos of mechanism, Jonas argues, "dead matter" has become the standard of intelligibility; hence the ontology of death that permeates the biological sciences is valued chiefly because it provides the grounding for technical efficiency (78ff). Yet technical efficiency, as I have suggested above, appears to stand at some distance from

considerations of moral value. The dilemma in which we land ourselves, then, is that some forms of biological knowledge must be knowledge divested of moral compassion. Morality, much like life, is, in Jonas's pithy phrase, "the stumbling block of theory" (Jonas, 1966: 10). Erazim Kohák, ever fond of making his philosophical points anecdotally, puts it this way:

The small sturdy dog, tan and white, who curls up against me as I sit, watching the full moon, is so tangibly material. Still, were nothing left of him but the matter in and as which he is incarnate, it would be he no longer. The reality of that dog, the abused, abandoned mutt, craving affection, who took up residence with me, is not matter but a meaningful presence of which materiality is but one component. It is a personal reality, not an impersonal one, a focused complex of meanings whose name is Miša, Mikey. Any conceptual or physical reduction of that subject presence to the ideal or the material component would present not a reality but an abstraction. (1984: 203)

The wholeness of the dog about which Kohák writes must include necessarily its moral aspect. Note that Kohák does not argue for consideration of the dog's moral status, for its moral status is prefigured in the fact that the dog's

nature is both its material and its moral being. The dog is not a robot; it is not convertible to its material substrates. It is a being for which a person (Kohák, at least) feels responsibility. As such, the dog's moral condition is already given, already present in the obligation that Kohák recognizes in himself. He might argue whether or not the dog has rights, but this would be a juridical argument only, saying little about the dog's moral standing. Each of us who "knows" a dog--or a cat, or a horse, or a hamster--in the fashion Kohák has described, knows also that the animal is not reducible to its sheer materiality. And it is the animal's moral aspect that makes such a reduction an absurdity. Empathic disconnection grows impossible as the animal's moral dimension is recognized.

In being responsible for the Other, I am a part of a moral relation even before I inquire as to my ethical duties. The animal Other is the subject of my responsibility because my obligations are constituted as obligations of *being-for* by my encounter with the animal's vulnerability. As I attend to the pain of the Other, Levinas suggests, I make a mockery of my concern if I must also debate the ethical appropriateness of my actions (Levinas, 1988). If I must first inquire whether my compassionate feelings will be socially legitimated, then I

willfully ignore the motives from which my compassion springs. I must give up the certainty of the ethical code, as Bauman has put it, in order to claim the freedom that is granted by taking moral responsibility (Bauman, 1993, 1995). Obligations are embodied, incorporated experiences. In Caputo's words, "flesh is the surface to which obligation clings" (1993: 196). The alterity of the Other's flesh--whether that Other be human or animal--is the cause of my concern.

### **The Moral Animal**

In place of the animal as moral Other, animal rights activists have argued for a new ethics, one that is based on reason and logical deduction. But here we merely encounter a variant of what Fox refers to above as empathic disconnection. Animal activists accept the Cartesian doctrine of mind-body dualism, and sever the emotional call of the moral response from the intellectual determination of ethical duty. So long as they insist that being an "animal lover" is an emotional experience that must be overcome, animal activists overlook the essential source of moral feeling, the affective connaturality (Tallon 1995) by which our feelings for the animal Other are experienced as obligatory. In rejecting the affectivity of the moral

relation with the animal Other, animal activists formulate in its place a "new ethics" by which our regard for, and treatment of, animals is to be regulated. Empathic disconnection, the sin of the mechanist and his repudiation of subjectivity, is thus revisited in animal rights thinking. The feel of flesh in the moral relation is replaced with the resistance of contact in the abstract domain of ethical duties.

As I suggested in my discussion of the role of emotion in Levinas's moral philosophy, the strategy of divesting our moral concepts of affective considerations makes it virtually impossible to conceive of the Other as constituted in a moral relation. The success of procedural rationality is precisely that it makes moral relations impossible, establishing in their place relations of commerce and contractuality. As Bauman suggests, this is precisely the formula for moral indifference:

The spirit of business militates against sentiments, moral sentiments most prominent among them. Business interests cannot easily be squared with the sense of responsibility for the welfare and well-being of those who may find themselves affected by the business pursuit of greatest effects. In business language, 'rationalization' means more often than not laying off

people who used to derive their livelihood from serving the business task before. They are now 'redundant' because a more effective way to use the assets has been found--and their past services do not count for much: each business transaction, to be truly rational, must start from scratch, forgetting past merits and debts of gratitude. Business rationality shirks responsibility for its own consequences, and this is another mortal blow to the influence of moral considerations. (1995:

264)

Rationality, as Bauman says, has no memory. It starts anew at each moment of decision-making, leaving aside the past contributions of the Other so as to move ahead unimpeded by obligation. Rationality only succeeds to the extent that it ignores sentiment, disavows past obligations, overlooks individual difference, and values empathic disconnection. Its success is guaranteed when it elevates objectivity above subjectivity, and the ethical code above the moral relation.

Hence I would suggest that the *animal rights movement* is an expression of our collective failure to face up to the moral obligations we have for animals. It is an attempt to reframe those obligations in terms of rational, discursive logic. For animal activists like Singer and Regan, animals are not, strictly speaking, moral beings. Instead they are

conceptualized as creatures to whom duties are owed by virtue of the fact that they resemble us in significant, somatic ways. When Singer draws the line separating ethical concern from ethical indifference, he draws this line adjacent to the divide separating sentience from instinct. His new ethics, in other words, parallels the developments of biological research, and reconfigures itself according to the latest findings in zoology and animal psychology. He largely ignores issues of morality, in other words, so as to concentrate on the delineation of a form of reason discursive ethics.

Such ethical cartography follows, I suggest, from the fact that the animal rights movement cannot abide the absolute alterity of the animal Other, and must seek out ways of reducing the other to the same, to adopt Levinas's phrase. Only in the reduction of the moral other to the ethical subject can animals be conceived as deserving of some kind of ethical address. But it is precisely their difference, precisely the fact that their being exceeds reduction to human sameness, that establishes the grounds of their moral being. Kohák writes:

We need to recognize that the suffering we impose on animals is not automatically justified by our convenience. The two claims must be measured and

adjudicated, much as the conflicting claims of two humans. If anything, since our animal kin cannot speak for themselves, we need to recognize our obligation to speak for them, to protest the heedless slaughter of whales and seals as much as the moral scandal of the needless suffering of laboratory animals and the brutality of the "biomechanism" approach to raising food animals. Again, we may be less affluent for it, much as the feudal lord would have been much less affluent if he recognized the moral claim of his subjects, but we shall be much richer, much more human for it. (1984: 213)

Like Levinas, Kohák wishes to put aside the usual arguments about convenience, wealth, and the advancement of knowledge in order to focus our attention, if only momentarily, on the obligation each of us has for the suffering of Others-- including, in this case, animals. What we choose to do in the face of such obligations is left up to us; though obligation calls, Caputo points out, disobedience is often the answer. Having acknowledged obligation, we may then choose to bring forward the excuses, the explanations, the theories, and the justifications that enable us to avoid election. But obligation, the feeling of responsibility, comes before the reasons explaining why the call cannot (or

will not) be answered. We must "admit the existence of a dimension of experience inaccessible to the cognitive discourse of ontology," in order to realize that no matter how we choose to deal with obligation, we cannot thereby eradicate its priority (Furrow, 1995: 143).

Animals are beings of utmost vulnerability, helpless in the face of human projects for assimilation, annihilation, and control. As such, we approach them as beings which can engage us morally, for it is the feeling of being responsible for their suffering that we must overcome continually, as Descartes demonstrated. When we conceptualize them as worthy subjects of an ethical agenda, we merely rediscover the Same in the Other (Levinas, 1993: 96ff). But if we attend to the felt responsibility for animals, then we privilege the capacity within ourselves to express more completely our human nature.

Descartes's pride at having eliminated the reason for feeling guilt at the idea of mistreating animals, and Bauman's suggestion that the ultimate function of ethics is to free ourselves from both the guilt and the responsibility of decision-making, resonate across the centuries. We may take solace in the logic of an ethical agenda that permits us to ignore the suffering of the Other, but solace of this kind is purchased by denying the value of obligation as a

form of relation that helps us to connect with Others, no matter in what form those Others might appear. To argue the inapplicability of moral considerations to animals is to devalue the animal Other as well as to devalue morality (Kohák, 1984). Ultimately, such denial may devalue us as well. The call of the wild is the call of the animal as moral Other.

### **Obligation and Belonging**

I began this essay by asking whether or not animals warrant moral obligation, and whether we should extend to non-human creatures a moral compassion that exceeds the consideration we are inclined at present to offer. But the reader may now question whether an answer to this question is even possible. I have suggested that there is a fundamental incompatibility between reason discursive ethical programs and the moral relation. I have further indicated that morality is an attunement to the Other in which responsibility is made manifest. But I have said little about the sorts of duties any of us must fulfill in order to consider our actions as moral. Instead, I have suggested that the moral relation described by Levinas is limited in what it can tell us about a proper course of behavior. In this I have intimated that Levinas (and other

so-called antitheorist moral philosophers) can offer us little if anything in the way of concrete, day-to-day prescriptions for good living. As Colin Davis suggests:

Levinas is not interested in establishing norms or standards for moral behaviour, nor in examining the nature of ethical language or the conditions of how to live well.... Levinas's ethics, as an enquiry into the nature of the ethical, analyses and attempts to maintain the possibility of a respectful, rewarding encounter with the Other; and it endeavours to discern the sources of a humane and just society in this encounter. (1996: 3-4)

Levinas's perspective shifts our interest in moral questions from the usual prescriptive mode to a descriptive mode, but a descriptive mode that is rich and far-reaching in its illustrative powers. There is little in the way of an ethical agenda in such an analysis, of course, as several of his commentators have pointed out. Indeed, many of Levinas's interpreters--especially Bauman (1993, 1995)--have suggested that one of the reasons we might shy away from accepting his views is not simply because he fails to include a metaethical recipe for moral behavior, but because he hints at something far more profound than a simple list of rules-to-live-by. Indeed, Levinas's views are sometimes

difficult to accept because in eschewing programmatic statements, he forces us to acknowledge that *personal responsibility comes before ethical duty*. To ask for a how-to manual that spells out the ways in which we are to treat animals is to confess that we are either unable or unwilling to examine our own feelings of responsibility and obligation, and that it is simpler and less emotionally challenging to accept that some other set of criteria independent of our feelings legitimates how we are to act. Once again we return to a point made earlier, that how to be ethical and how to be moral are two modes of acting in the world that reveal their differences in their contradictory motivations.

This discussion has the effect, of course, of throwing the question of animal moral status back upon the interlocutor, and reframing the inquiry so as to make it a matter of how each of us responds to the assumption of obligation (Caputo, 1993). In this sense, perhaps, we need to ask a different question entirely, a question that inquires as to the reasons why we would choose not to respond to suffering, not to do what we could to alleviate the misery of any Other, human or non-human. The real question, as Levinas has intimated, is *why we choose to justify the Other's suffering*. Hence my opening query,

Levinas might reply, betrays the contamination of ontology and its embeddedness in power. Perhaps we need to ask why we ignore the feelings of responsibility that surround us daily.

Levinas views the main function of Western philosophy as a process of domination, assimilation, and control. It is his argument, in other words, that as we seek knowledge about the world, and as we attempt to systematically organize that knowledge in rational categories, we take possession of the things in the world we seek to learn about in ways that do them a form of metaphysical violence. All of Western philosophy, he says, is about suppressing the Other. The Western philosophical tradition aims at reducing the Other to the Same, or of rediscovering the Same in the Other. Western philosophy, we might summarize, is viewed by Levinas as a quest for possessing the Other in a way that does not permit the Other the full expression of its otherness. If there is a maxim to Western intellectual thought, it might be that alterity must be domesticated.

In addressing the Other as one whose very alterity permits my freedom, Levinas suggests that I cannot assimilate the Other to my projects without thereby dominating the Other in a way that is insensitive and disrespectful. Hence I would suggest that in the attempt to

possess the Other I have acted toward the Other in a disrespectful and potentially immoral fashion. If I compromise the Other's integrity in my efforts to make the Other conform to my interests, my expectations, and my social or political agenda, then the Other's difference has been denied, and the Other has been reduced to that which serves me and my concerns in a strictly utilitarian manner. All of this is spelled out in Levinas's work.

Peter Singer and Thomas Regan's respective ethical arguments aim at the assimilation of the animal Other through a denial of the Other's alterity. Ethical agendas premised on the similarity thesis are also premised on the primary mode of analysis found in the Western philosophical tradition, namely the rediscovery of the Same in the Other. Moreover, in order to conceptualize the Other as a deserving recipient of ethical treatment, the Other must be possessed by the Same, taken over, as it were, by those interests that have motivated the individual whose values are represented in the ethical program into which the Other is assimilated. This view is expressed clearly in Kohák's claim that

whatever I come to possess, to dominate, be it a tool, an animal, or a fellow human being, can no longer be a companion. It becomes alien. The world humans master, though they may claim to own it, does not become their

own, belonging to them in the intimate sense in which a father belongs to a son or a husband to a wife. The possessed world becomes a dead world in our hands, lifeless and meaningless. (1984: 104)

This distinction between possessing and belonging, Kohák argues, is crucial. Ethical relations, especially relations founded on contractual and reciprocal arrangements, are concerned chiefly with possession and hierarchies of power. Moral relations, on the other hand, are concerned with recognizing individual obligations and assuming personal responsibility; in this regard, they are mainly concerned not with hierarchies of power, but with the lived experience of belonging. What I claim to possess, Kohák argues, can never belong to me, and whatever belongs to me, I can never treat as a mere possession (1984: 106). Hence the otherness of the Other, which can never be possessed, establishes a bond of belonging. When we try to reduce that bond to mere possession (as we do when we try to organize the Other into an ethical system) we neutralize the moral relation of belonging. As Kohák writes:

The more the land and I belonged to each other, the less did I possess it. The very concept of possessing belongs to a different order. It is a formal claim, not a lived bond. It represents a unidirectional claim

to mastery--the "right" to "use or abuse, destroy or alienate"--rather than the experience of mutual belonging. The claim to possess cannot grow out of a lived experience; it is an abstract, legal claim, a construct established by social convention to order the life of a world of artifacts. It may well be necessary in a crowded, complex society, assigning responsibilities and rights. It may even be legitimate, as a formalization of a lived experience. But the truth, the reality itself, is of a different order, the personal experience of a bond between a person and the land he tills, the worker and the familiar tool which is the companion of his labor, the person and his body. Those are not experiences of possession and domination but of being at ease, at home with each other, of belonging together. (1984: 106-107)

Our moral relations with animals, I would suggest, are framed by the mutuality of belonging, and not by the unidirectional structure of possession. Indeed, belonging, one might argue, precedes possession; in Levinas's words, one could say that belonging is better than possession insofar as it stands outside of the conventional categories of domination and control that characterize possession.

Belonging is a kind of moral engagement distinct from the convention-driven ethical dictates of possessing.

All truly moral relations, then, are relations of belonging. The inarticulate animal may challenge the comprehensive logic of an ethical program based on utilitarian or neo-Kantian calculations, but in the face to face encounter, her incarnate being, her capacity to suffer, and her purposeful nature as a signifying Other may indeed place us under obligation. Ultimately, therefore, I do not believe that the central question is whether animals are moral beings, as this seems to follow from my application of Levinas's views. Rather, the question we should consider is why we willingly choose to ignore the moral responsibilities that animals may conjure up within us. I believe it is our obligation to acknowledge these obligations, to accept that we are obliged by animals. How these obligations are thematized in the domain of ontology is a separate question. Though we might wish to strive for justice in our treatment of other creatures, the record of our treatment of other humans indicates how great is the division between the moral relation of one-for-the-other, and the implementation of universal practises of justice and equality. Nevertheless, it is the moral relation with which we must begin.

## Bibliography

- Adams, Carol J. (1990). The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory. New York: Continuum Books.
- Alexander, Samuel. (1939). The mind of a dog. Philosophical and Literary Pieces. London: Macmillan.
- Appleman, Philip, ed. (1979). Darwin: A Norton Critical Edition (2nd edition). New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas. (1951). Philosophical Texts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Aristotle. De Anima (On the Soul). (1986). Translated by Hugh Lawson-Tancred. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Arnold, Matthew. (1960). Culture and Anarchy (1875). London: Cambridge University Press.
- Attenborough, David. (1979). Life on Earth: A Natural History. Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company.
- Averill, James. (1982). Anger and Aggression. New York: Springer.
- Bagehot, Walter. (1872). Physics and Politics: or Thoughts on the Application of the Principles of "Natural Selection" and "Inheritance" to Political Society. Boston: Beacon Press, 1956.

- Barfield, Owen. (1965). Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry (2nd edition). Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Barrett, William. (1987). The Death of the Soul: From Descartes to the Computer. Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Barthes, Roland. (1972). Mythologies. London: Granada Publishing.
- Bateson, Gregory. (1972). Form, substance, and difference. Steps to an Ecology of Mind. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. (1995). Life in Fragments: Towards a Postmodern Morality. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. (1993). Postmodern Ethics. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. (1987). Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-modernity and Intellectuals. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Becker, Morton O. (1972). Mechanism in biology. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edited by Paul Taylor. New York and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers. Vol. V, 250-252.
- Benton, Ted. (1988). Humanism=Speciesism: Marx on Humans and Animals. Radical Philosophy 50: 4-18..

- Berger, Peter. (1980). Why look at animals? About Looking. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Berman, Morris. (1989). Coming to Our Senses: Body and Spirit in the Hidden History of the West. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Berman, Morris. (1981). The Reenchantment of the World. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Bertalanffy, Ludwig von. (1955). An essay on the relativity of categories. Philosophy of Science 22: 243-263.
- Bierce, Ambrose. (1978). The Devil's Dictionary (1906). Owings Mill, Maryland: Stemmer House Publishers.
- Birch, Charles. (1988). The postmodern challenge to biology. The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals. Ed. David Ray Griffin. New York: State University of New York Press, 69-78.
- Boas, George. (1973). Primitivism. Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Ed. Philip P. Wiener. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Vol. III, pp. 577-598.
- Boas, George. (1973). Theriophily. Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Ed. Philip P. Wiener. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Vol. IV, pp. 384-389.

- Bookchin, Murray. (1990). The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Naturalism. Montreal and New York: Black Rose Books.
- Boorstin, Daniel J. (1983). The Discoverers. New York: Vintage Books.
- Bordo, Susan. (1986). The Cartesian masculinization of thought. Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society 2 (Spring): 439-456.
- Borgmann, Albert. (1993). The moral significance of the material culture. Technology and the Politics of Knowledge. Eds. Andrew Feenberg and Alastair Hannay. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Boring, E. G. (1950). A History of Experimental Psychology. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Bostock, Stephen St. C. (1993). Zoos and Animal Rights: The Ethics of Keeping Animals. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bowler, Peter. (1984). Evolution: The History of an Idea. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brent, Peter. (1981). Charles Darwin: A Man of Enlarged Curiosity. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company.

- Buber, Martin. (1965). The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays. Translated by Maurice Freedman and Ronald Gregor Smith. New York: Harper.
- Budiansky, Stephen. (1991). The Covenant of the Wild: Why Animals Chose Domestication. New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Buren, Paul van. (1972). The Edges of Language: An Essay in the Logic of a Religion. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Burke, Kenneth. (1966). Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method. Berkeley and London: University of California Press.
- Burke, Kenneth. (1957). The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action. New York: Vintage Books.
- Buytendijk, F. J. J. (1943). Pain: Its Mode and Functions. Translated by Eda O'Shiel. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Campbell, Jeremy. (1989). The Improbable Machine: What Upheavals in Artificial Intelligence Reveal About How the Mind Really Works. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Caplan, Arthur L., Ed. (1978). The Sociobiology Debate: Readings on Ethical and Scientific Issues. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

- Capra, Fritjof. (1975). The Tao of Physics. New York: Fontana/Collins.
- Caputo, John. (1993). Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation With Constant Reference to Deconstruction. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Carnegie, Andrew. (1900). The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays. Ed. Edward C. Kirkland. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Carse, James P. (1986). Finite and Infinite Games: A Vision of Life as Play and Possibility. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Cassirer, Ernst. (1944). An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Challinor, David. (1989). Introduction: Contrasting viewpoints. Perceptions of Animals in American Culture. Ed. R. J. Hoage. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1-3.
- Channell, David F. (1991). The Vital Machine: A Study of Technology and Organic Life. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clark, David. (1997). On being 'The Last Kantian in Nazi Germany': Dwelling with animals after Levinas. Animal

- Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History. Eds. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior. New York and London: Routledge Books.
- Clark, Stephen. (1987). The Moral Status of Animals. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Companion Animals in Society. (1988). Report of a Working Party Council for Science and Technology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cottingham, John. (1992). Introduction. In The Cambridge Companion to Descartes. Ed. John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Critchley, Simon. (1992). The Ethics of Deconstruction. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Crowley, David and Heyer, Paul. (1991). Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society. New York and London: Longman.
- Darnton, Robert. (1984). The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History. New York: Basic Books.
- Darwin, Charles. (1881). The Formation of Vegetable Mould, through the Action of Worms. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985 facsimile edition.
- Darwin, Charles. (1877). A biographical sketch of an infant. Mind 2 (no. 7): 285-294.

- Darwin, Charles. (1872). The Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.
- Darwin, Charles. (1871). The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex. New York: The Modern Library.
- Darwin, Charles. (1859). The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, The Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.
- Darwin, Francis, ed. (1892). The Autobiography of Charles Darwin and Selected Letters. New York: Dover Publications, 1958.
- Davis, Colin. (1996). Levinas: An Introduction. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Dawkins, Richard. (1976). The Selfish Gene. London and New York: Granada Publishing.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1995). 'Eating Well,' or the calculation of the subject. Points: Interviews, 1974-1994. Ed. Elisabeth Weber. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 255-287.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1990). Force of law: The mystical foundation of authority. Cardozo Law Review, 11: 919-1078.

- Derrida, Jacques. (1981). Positions. Translated by Alan Bass. London: Athlone Press.
- Descartes, Rene. (1978a). Discourse on Method (1637).  
Translated by John Veitch. London and Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons.
- Descartes, Rene. (1978b). Meditations on the First Philosophy, in Which the Existence of God and the Real Distinction of Mind and Body, are Demonstrated (1641).  
Translated by John Veitch. London and Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons.
- Descartes, Rene. (1978c). The Principles of Philosophy (1644). Translated by John Veitch. London and Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons.
- Descartes, René. (1972). Treatise of Man (1664).  
Translated by Thomas Steele Hall. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Descartes, Rene. (1970). Philosophical Letters.  
Translated and Edited by Anthony Kenny. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Donovan, Josephine. (1990). Animal rights and feminist theory. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 15: 350-375.
- Ehrenfeld, David. (1986). Life in the next millennium: who will be left in earth's community? The Last

- Extinction. Eds. Kaufman, Les and Mallory, Kenneth.  
Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT  
Press, 167-186.
- Ehrenfeld, David. (1981). The Arrogance of Humanism.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eiseley, Loren. (1958). Darwin's Century: Evolution and  
the Men Who Discovered It. Garden City, New York:  
Anchor Books.
- Eiseley, Loren. (1946). The Immense Journey. New York and  
Toronto: Random House.
- Eisenstein, Elizabeth. (1979). The Printing Press as an  
Agent of Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University  
Press.
- Eliade, Mircea. (1957). The Sacred and the Profane: The  
Nature of Religion. Translated by Willard R. Trask.  
New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1959.
- Elias, Norbert. (1991). On human beings and their  
emotions: a process-sociological essay. The Body:  
Social Process and Cultural Theory. Edited by Mike  
Featherstone, Mike Hepworth, and Bryan S. Turner.  
London and Newbury Park: Sage Publications, pp.103-  
125.

- Elias, Norbert. (1982). State Formation and Civilization: The Civilizing Process, vol. II. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Elias, Norbert. (1978). The History of Manners: The Civilizing Process, vol. I. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Engels, Frederick. (1873-1886). Dialectics of Nature. In Marx/Engels On Religion. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975.
- Evans, E. P. (1906). The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals. London: Faber and Faber, 1987.
- Evernden, Neil. (1992). The Social Creation of Nature. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Evernden, Neil. (1985). The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Fawcett, Henry. (1860). A popular exposition of Mr. Darwin on the *Origin of Species*. Macmillan's Magazine 3, (December): 81-92.
- Featherstone, Mike, Hepworth, Mike, and Turner, Bryan S, Eds. (1991). The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory. London and Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Feinberg, Joel. (1974). The rights of animals and unborn generations. Philosophy and Environmental Crisis. Ed.

- William T. Blackmore. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, pp. 41-67.
- Fiddes, Nick. (1991). Meat: A Natural Symbol. New York and London: Routledge Books.
- Fiske, John. (1993). Power Plays, Power Works. London and New York: Verso.
- Foucault, Michel. (1979). Discipline and Punish. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel, 1975. The Birth of the Clinic. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. (1970). The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. New York: Vintage Books.
- Fox, Michael W. (1996). Beastly questions. The Ecology of Health: Identifying Issues and Alternatives. Ed. Jennifer Chesworth. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Fox, Michael W. (1980) Returning to Eden: Animal Rights and Human Responsibility. Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing.
- Fraser, Nancy. (1989). Unruly Practices. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- French, Richard D. (1975). Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Frye, Marilyn. (1983). The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory. Freedom, California: The Crossing Press.
- Fuller, B. A. G. (1949). The messes animals make in metaphysics. Journal of Philosophy 46: 829-838.
- Furrow, Dwight. (1995). Against Theory: Continental and Analytic Challenges in Moral Philosophy. New York and London: Routledge.
- Gadamer, Hans Georg. (1981). Reason in the Age of Science. Translated by Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press.
- Gadamer, Hans Georg. (1975). Truth and Method. Translated by Garrett Barden and John Cumming. New York: Crossroad.
- Gergen, Kenneth. (1991). The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life. New York: Basic Books.
- Ghiselin, Michael T. (1969). The Triumph of the Darwinian Method. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- Giddens, Anthony. (1987). Social Theory and Modern Sociology. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Giedion, Siegfried. (1948). Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Gill, James E. (1969). Theriophily in antiquity: A supplementary account. Journal of the History of Ideas 30 (no. 3), 401-412.
- Gillespie, Neal C. (1979). Charles Darwin and the Problem of Creation. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Gilligan, Carol. (1982). In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Glass, Bentley, Temkin, Owsei, and Strauss, William L. Jr., eds. (1959). Forerunners of Darwin: 1745-1859. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.
- Goldschmidt, Richard. (1940). The Material Basis of Evolution. New Jersey: Pageant Books, 1960.
- Goodman, Nelson. (1960). The way the world is. Review of Metaphysics 14: 48-56.
- Goudge, Thomas. (1972). Uexkull, Jakob Johann, Baron Von. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edited by Paul Taylor.

New York and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.

Vol. VIII, 173-74.

- Green, Ronald M. (1977). Intergenerational distributive justice and environmental responsibility. BioScience 27 (no. 4): 260-265.
- Greene, John C. (1981). Science, Ideology, and World View: Essays in the History of Evolutionary Ideas. Berkeley and London: University of California Press.
- Greene, John C. (1959). The Death of Adam: Evolution and Its Impact on Western Thought. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press.
- Grene, Marjorie. Individuals and their kinds: Aristotelian foundations of biology. Organism, Medicine, and Metaphysics. Ed. S. F. Spicker. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Riedel Publishing Company.
- Grene, Marjorie. (1968). F. J. J. Buytendijk. Approaches to a Philosophical Biology. New York: Basic Books.
- Grene, Marjorie. (1968). Approaches to a Philosophical Biology. New York: Basic Books.
- Grene, Marjorie. (1968). Adolf Portmann. Approaches to a Philosophical Biology. New York: Basic Books.
- Griffin, David Ray. (1988). The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals. New York: State University of New York Press.

- Griffin, Donald R. (1984). Animal Thinking. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Gruber, Howard E. (1981). Darwin On Man: A Psychological Study of Scientific Creativity. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Hall, A. Rupert. (1981). From Galileo to Newton. New York: Dover Books. (Originally published by Harper & Row in 1963 as Volume III of the series The Rise of Modern Science.)
- Hall, Edward T. (1984). The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time. New York and Toronto: Anchor Press.
- Haraway, Donna. (1991). Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge.
- Harrison, Peter. (1989). Theodicy and animal pain. Philosophy 64: 79-92.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1977). The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays. Translated by W. Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row.
- Herzog, Harold A. (1988). The moral status of mice. American Psychologist (June, 1988): 473- 474.
- Hobson, E. W. (1923). The Domain of Natural Science. New York: Dover Books, 1968.

- Horkheimer, Max. (1972). Critical Theory: Selected Essays. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell and others. New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
- Howell, Signe. (1984). Society and Cosmos: Chewong of Peninsula Malaysia. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hull, David. (1973). Darwin and His Critics: The Reception of Darwin's Theory of Evolution by the Scientific Community. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Humphrey, Nicholas. (1987). Foreword to E. P. Evans, The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals. London: Faber and Faber.
- Huxley, Julian. (1942). Evolution: The Modern Synthesis. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Huxley, Thomas Henry. (1893). Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays. New York : D. Appleton, 1902.
- Ihde, Don. (1995). Image technologies and traditional culture. Technology and the Politics of Knowledge. Eds. Andrew Feenberg and Alastair Hannay. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Ihde, Don. (1993). Philosophy of Technology. New York: Paragon House.
- Ingold, Tim, editor. (1988). What is an Animal? London: Unwin Hyman.

- Innis, Harold A. (1951). The Bias of Communication.  
Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Irvine, William. (1955). Apes, Angels, and Victorians: Darwin, Huxley and Evolution. New York: Meridian Books.
- Jablonski, David. (1986). Mass extinctions: new answers, new questions. The Last Extinction. Eds. Kaufman, Les and Mallory, Kenneth. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 43-62.
- Jamieson, Dale. (1985). Against zoos. In Defense of Animals. Ed. Peter Singer. New York: Harper & Row, 108-117.
- Jamison, Wesley V., and William M. Lurch. (1992). Rights of Animals, Perceptions of Science, and Political Activism: Profile of American Animal Rights Activists. Science, Technology & Human Values 17 (No. 4): pp. 438-458.
- Jolley, Nicholas. (1992). The Reception of Descartes's Philosophy. In The Cambridge Companion to Descartes. Ed. John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jonas, Hans. (1966) The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

- Kalikow, Theodara. (1983) Konrad Lorenz's ethological theory: Explanation and ideology, 1938-1943. Journal of the History of Biology 16: 39-73.
- Kant, Immanuel. (1989). Duties to animals and spirits. Lectures on Ethics. Translated by Louis Infield. New York: Harper and Row, 1963. Reprinted in Regan and Singer, 1989 as Duties in regards to animals, pp. 23-24.
- Kant, Immanuel. (1984). Critique of Pure Reason (1987). Translated by J. M. D. Meiklejohn. London and Melbourne: Everyman's Library.
- Kant, Immanuel. (1969). Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (1785). Translated by Lewis White Beck. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Katcher, Aaron, and Wilkins, Gregory. (1993) Dialogue with Animals: Its Nature and Culture. The Biophilia Hypothesis. Edited by Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson. Washington, D.C. and Covelo, California: Island Press.
- Kaufman, Les. (1986). Why the ark is sinking. The Last Extinction. Eds. Kaufman, Les and Mallory, Kenneth. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1-42.

- Kellert, Stephen R. (1993). The biological basis for human values of nature. The Biophilia Hypothesis. Eds. Stephen R. Kellert, and Edward Wilson. Washington, D.C. and Covelo, California: Island Press, pp.42-69.
- Kellert, Stephen R., and Wilson, E. O., editors. (1993). The Biophilia Hypothesis. Washington, D.C. and Covelo, California: Island Press.
- Kellner, Douglas, and Steven Best. (1991). Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kitcher, Philip. (1985). Vaulting Ambition: Sociobiology and the Quest for Human Nature. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press.
- Kohák, Erazim. (1984). The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kropotkin, Petr. (1914 edition). Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution. Boston: Extending Horizons Books.
- Landau, Misia. (1984). Human evolution as narrative. American Scientist 72: 262-268.
- Langer, Susanne K. (1941). Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art. New York: Mentor Books.

- Lavine, T. Z. (1984). From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest. New York: Bantam Books.
- Lawrence, Elizabeth A. (1990). Rodeo horses: The wild and the tame. Signifying Animals: Human Meaning in the Natural World. Ed. Roy Willis. London: Unwin Hyman, 222-235.
- Lawrence, Elizabeth A. (1989). Neotony in American perceptions of animals. Perceptions of Animals in American Culture. Ed. R. J. Hoage. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 57-76.
- Leach, Edmund. (1964). Anthropological aspects of language: Animal Categories and verbal abuse. In New Directions in the Study of Language, ed. E. M. Leeneberg. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Leahy, Michael P. T. (1991). Against Liberation: Putting Animals in Perspective. New York and London: Routledge.
- Lecky, W. E. H. (1911). The History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne. 3rd edition. New York: Longmans.
- Leder, Drew. (1990). The Absent Body. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Leiss, William. (1974). The Domination of Nature. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Lenoir, Timothy. (1982). The Strategy of Life. Dordrecht:  
D. Riedel.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. (1967). Structural Anthropology  
(1958). Translated by Claire Jacobson. New York:  
Anchor Books.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. (1966). The Savage Mind (1962).  
Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1993). Philosophy and the idea of the  
infinite. In Adriaan Peperzak, To the Other: An  
Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas.  
Trans. Adriaan Peperzak. West Lafayette, Indiana:  
Purdue University Press.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1988). Useless suffering. The  
Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other. Eds.  
Robert Bernasconi and David Wood. New York and London:  
Routledge.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1985). Ethics and Infinity:  
Conversations with Philippe Nemo. Trans. Richard A.  
Cohen. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1984a). Peace and proximity.  
Reprinted in Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical  
Writings. Edited by Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley,  
and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington and Indianapolis:  
Indiana University Press, 1996, pp.161-169.

- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1984). Transcendence and intelligibility. Reprinted in Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings. Edited by Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp.149-159.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1981). Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. The Hague, Boston and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1975). God and philosophy. Reprinted in Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings. Edited by Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 129-148.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1972). Truth of disclosure and truth of testimony. Reprinted in Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings. Edited by Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 98-107.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1969). Totality and Infinity. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. (1964). Meaning and sense. Reprinted in Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings.

Edited by Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 33-64.

Levinas, Emmanuel. (1962). Transcendence and height.

Reprinted in Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings. Edited by Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 11-31.

Levinas, Emmanuel. (1951). Is ontology fundamental?

Reprinted in Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings. Edited by Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 1-10.

Lingis, Alphonso. (1981). Translator's Introduction.

Emmanuel Levinas, Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence. The Hague, Boston and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Linzey, Andrew. (1987). Christianity and the Rights of Animals. London: SPCK.

Livingston, James C. (1989). Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Livingston, John A. (1994). Rogue Primate: An Exploration of Human Domestication. Toronto: Key Porter Books.

- Livingston, John A. (1981). The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Llewelyn, John. (1995). Emmanuel Levinas: The Genealogy of Ethics. London and New York: Routledge.
- Llewelyn, John. (1991). Am I obsessed by Bobby? (Humanism of the Other Animal). Re-Reading Levinas. Eds. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Llewelyn, John. (1991). The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience: A Chiasmic Reading of Responsibility in the Neighbourhood of Levinas, Heidegger and Others. London: Macmillan.
- Locke, John. (1693). Some Thoughts Concerning Education. Edited with an introduction and notes by Peter Gay. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964.
- Locke, John. (1690). An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Great Britain: Collins Fount, 1964.
- Lockwood, Randall. (1989). Anthropomorphism is not a four-letter word. Perceptions of Animals in American Culture. Ed. R. J. Hoage. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 41-56.

- Loeb, Louis E. (1992). The Cartesian Circle. In The Cambridge Companion to Descartes. Ed. John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Løgstrup, Knud. (1971). The Ethical Demand. Translated by Theodor I. Jensen. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Lorenz, Konrad, (1977). Behind the Mirror: A Search for a Natural History of Human Knowledge. Translated by Ronald Taylor. New York and London: Methuen and Company.
- Lorenz, Konrad. (1952). King Solomon's Ring: New Light On Animal Ways. Translated by Marjorie Kerr Wilson. New York: Time-Life Books, 1962.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. (1936). The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea (1976, 13th printing). Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press.
- Lubar, Steven. (1993). Infoculture: The Smithsonian Book of Information Age Inventions. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Lutz, Catherine. (1988). Unnatural Emotions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francoise. (1988). The Differend: Phrases in Dispute. Translated by Georges Van Den Abeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Machan, Tibor R. (1991). Do animals have rights? Public Affairs Quarterly 5 (2): 163-173.
- Malcolmson, R. (1982). Popular recreations under attack. In B. Waites, T. Bennett, and G. Martin (eds.) Popular Culture: Past and Present (pp.20-66). London: Croom Helm/Open University Press.
- Mander, Jerry. (1991). In the Absence of the Sacred. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Marias, Julian. (1970). José Ortega y Gasset: Circumstance and Vocation. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Marshack, Alexander. (1991). The Roots of Civilization: The Cognitive Roots of Man's First Art, Symbol and Notation. (Revised and expanded edition.) New York: Moyer Bell.
- McCarron, Gary, Tenenbein, Silva, and Hindley, Pat. (1992). Communication, health and belonging. Determinants of Health: A Critical Assessment. Victoria, B.C.: Western Geographical Series, Vol. 29, pp.57-72.
- Means, Russell. (1988). Fighting words on the future of earth. Questioning Technology: A Critical Anthology. Eds. John Zerzan and Alice Carnes. London: Freedom Press.

- Melzack, Ronald and Patrick Wall. (1988). The Challenge of Pain (Revised edition). Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.
- Merchant, Carolyn. (1980). The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution. San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). Phenomenology of Perception. Translated by Colin Smith. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Midgley, Mary. (1988). Beasts, brutes and monsters. What is an Animal? Ed. Tim Ingold. London: Unwin Hyman, pp. 35-46.
- Midgley, Mary. (1985). Persons and non-persons. In Defense of Animals. Ed. Peter Singer. New York: Harper & Row, 52-62.
- Midgley, Mary. (1983). Animals and Why They Matter: A Journey Around the Species Barrier. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Midgley, Mary. (1978). Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature. New York: Meridian Books.
- Mivart, St. George Jackson. (1871). Darwin's *Descent of Man*. Quarterly Review (July), 131: 47-90. Reprinted in Hull, 1973.

- Monod, Jacques. (1970). Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology. Translated by Austryn Wainhouse. New York: Vintage Books.
- Montaigne, Michel de. (1987). Essays (1592). Translated by M. A. Screech. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Nash, Jeffrey E., and Sutherland, Anne. (1991). The moral evaluation of animals: The case of "Gorillas in the Mist." International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 5: 111-126.
- Nash, Roderick. (1989). The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Nelkin, Dorothy. Science, technology, and political conflict: Analyzing the issues. Controversy: Politics of Technical Decisions (3rd Edition). Ed. Dorothy Nelkin. Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publications.
- Nelkin, Dorothy and James M. Jasper. (1992). The animal rights controversy. Controversy: Politics of Technical Decisions (3rd Edition). Ed. Dorothy Nelkin. Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publications.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. (1966). On the Genealogy of Morals (1887). New York: Vintage Books.

- Noske, Barbara. (1997). Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals. Montreal, Quebec, Buffalo, New York, London, England: Black Rose Books.
- Nuland, Sherwin B. (1988). Doctors: The Biography of Medicine. New York: Vintage Books.
- O'Sullivan, Tim; Hartley, John; Saunders, Danny; Montgomery, Martin; Fiske, John. (1994). Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies (2nd edition). London and New York: Routledge.
- Pappé, H. O. (1967). Philosophical anthropology. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edited by Paul Taylor. New York and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers. Vol. VI, pp. 159-166.
- Patterson, Colin. (1978). Evolution. London: Butler and Tanner Ltd.
- Patterson, Francine. (1978). Conversations with a gorilla. National Geographic 154 (October): 438-465.
- Peperzak, Adriaan. (1997). Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Peperzak, Adriaan, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi, editors. (1996). Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University press.

- Peperzak, Adriaan. (1995). Preface. Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion. Ed. Adriaan Peperzak. New York and London: Routledge.
- Peperzak, Adriaan. (1993). To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press.
- Pfungst, Oskar. (1911). Clever Hans (The Horse of Mr. Von Osten). Ed. Robert Rosenthal. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
- Phineas, Charles. (1974). Household pets and urban alienation. Journal of Social History 7(3): 338-343.
- Plumwood, Val. (1993). Feminism and the Mastery of Nature. London and New York: Routledge.
- Portmann, Adolf. (1990). A Zoologist Looks at Humankind (1944). Translated by Judith Schaefer. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Portmann, Adolf. (1977). Color sense and the meaning of color. Color Symbolism: Six Excerpts from the Eranos Yearbook 1972. Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications.
- Portmann, Adolf. (1967). Animal Forms and Patterns: A Study of the Appearance of Animals. Translated by Hella Czech. New York: Schocken Books.

- Portmann, Adolf. (1964). New Paths in Biology. Translated by Arnold J. Pomerans. New York: Harper and Row.
- Portmann, Adolf. (1961). Animals as Social Beings. Translated by Oliver Coburn. London: Hutchinson and Company.
- Portmann, Adolf. (1956). Animal Camouflage. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.
- Pritchard, Michael. (1991). On Becoming Responsible. Kansas: University Press of Kansas.
- Rachels, James. (1990). Created From Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rachels, James. (1989). Darwin, species, and morality. In Animal Rights and Human Obligations. Tom Regan and Peter Singer, eds. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 95-103.
- Radner, Daisie, and Radner, Michael. (1989). Animal Consciousness. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books.
- Regan, Tom. (1985). The case for animal rights. In Defense of Animals. Ed. Peter Singer. New York: Harper and Row.
- Regan, Tom. (1983). The Case for Animal Rights. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Regan, Tom, and Peter Singer. (1989). Animal Rights and Human Obligations. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Richards, Robert J. (1986). A defense of evolutionary ethics. Biology and Philosophy 1 (3): 265-293.
- Ricoeur, Paul. (1992). Oneself as Another. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ricoeur, Paul. (1974). The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics. Various translators. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Rifkin, Jeremy. (1987). Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History. New York and Toronto: Simon & Schuster.
- Rifkin, Jeremy. (1991). Biosphere Politics: A Cultural Odyssey from the Middle Ages to the New Age. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Ritvo, Harriet. (1987). The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Ritvo, Harriet. (1988). The emergence of modern pet-keeping. Animals and People Sharing the World. Ed. Andrew N. Rowan. Hanover and London: University Press of New England.

- Rollin, Bernard. (1989). The Unheeded Cry: Animal Consciousness, Animal Pain and Science. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Romanyshyn, Robert D. (1989). Technology as Symptom and Dream. London and New York: Routledge
- Rorty, Amelie Oksenberg. (1992). Descartes On Thinking With the Body. In The Cambridge Companion to Descartes. Ed. John Cottingham. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rowan, Andrew, editor. (1988). Animals and People Sharing the World. Hanover and London: University Press of New England.
- Ruse, Michael and Wilson, E. O. (1986). Moral philosophy as applied science. Philosophy 61: 173-192.
- Ruse, Michael. (1986). Evolutionary ethics: A Phoenix arisen. Zygon 21 (March): 95-112.
- Russell, Bertrand. (1945). A History of Western Philosophy. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Russow, Lilly-Marlene. (1989). Changing perceptions of animals: A philosophical view. Perceptions of Animals in American Culture. Ed. R. J. Hoage. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 25-39.

- Ryder, Richard. (1989). Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes towards Speciesism. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- Salisbury, Joyce E. (1994). The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages. New York and London: Routledge.
- Salt, Henry S. (1892). Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress. Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania: Society for Animal Rights, Inc., 1980.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. (1959). Course in General Linguistics (1916). Translated by Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Schachter, Stanley. (1964). The interaction of cognitive and physiological determinants of emotional state. In Advances in Experimental Social Psychology. Ed. L. Berkowitz. New York: Academic Press.
- Scheler, Max. (1928). Man's Place in Nature. Translated by Hans Meyerhoff. Boston: Beacon Books, 1961.
- Scholtmeijer, Marian. (1993). Animal Victims in Modern Fiction: From Sanctity to Sacrifice. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. (1851). Essays and Aphorisms. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970.

- Schrodinger, Erwin. (1945). What is Life? Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sebeok, Thomas A. (1986). The doctrine of signs. Journal of Social and Biological Structure 9: 345-352.
- Sebeok, Thomas A. (1979). Neglected figures in the history of semiotic inquiry: Jakob von Uexküll. The Sign and Its Masters. Austin and London: University of Texas Press.
- Senior, Matthew. (1997). 'When the Beasts Spoke': Animal speech and classical reason in Descartes and La Fontaine. Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History. Eds. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior. New York and London: Routledge Books.
- Serpell, James. (1986). In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships. Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Serpell, James. (1989). Pet-keeping and animal domestication: A reappraisal. The Walking Larder: Patterns of Domestication, Pastoration, and Predation. Ed. Juliet Clutton-Brock. London and Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Shell, M. (1986). The family pet. Representations 15 (Summer 1986): 121-153.

- Shepard, Paul. (1993). On animal friends. The Biophilia Hypothesis. Eds. Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson. Washington, D. C. and Covelo, California: Island Press, 275-300.
- Shepard, Paul. (1978). Thinking Animals: Animals and the Development of Human Intelligence. New York: Viking Press.
- Shotter, John. (1993). Social accountability and the social construction of 'you.' Texts of Identity. Eds. John Shotter and Kenneth Gergen. London and Newbury Park: SAGE Publications.
- Siebert, Charles. (1991). Where have all the animals gone? The lamentable extinction of zoos. Harper's 282 (Mly), 49-58.
- Silverman, Kaja. (1983). The Subject of Semiotics. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Simon, Michael A. (1986). Animal communication: Do animals mean what they say? Journal of Social and Biological Structure 9: 365-374.
- Singer, Peter. (1995). Is there a universal moral sense? Critical Review 9, no. 3: 325-339.
- Singer, Peter. (1993). Practical Ethics. (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Singer, Peter. (1989). All animals are equal. In Animal Rights and Human Obligations. Eds. Tom Regan and Peter Singer. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Singer, Peter. (1985). Ethics and the new animal liberation movement. In Defense of Animals. Ed. Peter Singer. New York: Harper and Row.
- Singer, Peter, editor. (1985). In Defense of Animals. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Singer, Peter. (1981). The Expanding Circle. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
- Singer, Peter. (1980). Preface to Animal Rights' Considered in Relation to Social Progress (1892), by Henry S. Salt. Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania: Society for Animal Rights (SAR), Inc.
- Singer, Peter. (1979). Not for humans only: The place of nonhumans in environmental issues. Ethics and Problems of the 21st Century. Eds. K. E. Goodpaster and K. M. Sayre. Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, pp. 191-206.
- Singer, Peter. (1975). Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals. New York: Avon Books.
- Singer, Peter. (1973). Animal liberation. New York Review of Books, 20 (April 5, 1973): 17-.

- Smith, Peter K., ed. (1984). Play in Animals and Humans.  
London: Basil Blackwell.
- Soja, Edward. (1989). Postmodern Geographies: The  
Reassertion of Space in Critical and Social Theory.  
London and New York: Verso.
- Sperling, Susan. (1988). Animal Liberators: Research and  
Morality. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sprigge, T. L. S. (1991). Some recent positions in  
environmental ethics examined. Inquiry 34: 107-128.
- Steinem, Gloria. (1992). Revolution from Within. Boston  
and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company.
- Stent, Gunther, ed. (1980). Morality as a Biological  
Phenomenon. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stone, Christopher. (1974). Should Trees Have Standing?  
Los Altos, California: Kaufmann Publishing.
- Storey, John. (1993). An Introductory Guide to Cultural  
Theory and Popular Culture. Athens, Georgia:  
University of Georgia Press.
- Strachey, James. (1985). Editor's Note to Sigmund Freud,  
Totem and Taboo (1913). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Strickland, Susan. (1994). Feminism, postmodernism and  
difference. Knowing the Difference: Feminist  
Perspectives in Epistemology. Eds. Kathleen Lennon and

- Margaret Whitford. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 265-274.
- Suzuki, David and Kundtson, Peter. (1992). Wisdom of the Elders: Sacred Native Stories of Nature. New York and Toronto: Bantam Books.
- Szasz, Kathleen. (1968). Petishism? Pets and Their People in the Western World. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Talbot, Michael. Mysticism and the New Physics. (1980). Toronto and New York: Bantam Books.
- Tallon, Andrew. (1995). Nonintentional affectivity, affective intentionality, and the ethical in Levinas's philosophy. Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion. Ed. Adriaan Peperzak. New York and London: Routledge.
- Taylor, Frederick, . (1911). The Principles of Scientific Management. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Taylor, Paul. (1986). Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Tester, Keith. (1991). Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights. London and New York: Routledge.

- Thomas, Keith. (1983). Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Thorpe, William, et. al. (1977). The frontiers of biology. Mind and Nature. Eds. John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin. Washington, D.C.: The University Press of America.
- Tijmes, Pieter. (1995). The Archimedean point and eccentricity: Hannah Arendt's philosophy of science and technology. Technology and the Politics of Knowledge. Eds. Andrew Feenberg and Alastair Hannay. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Tobias, Michael, editor. (1988). Deep Ecology. (Revised, second edition.) San Marcos, California: Avant Books.
- Torrey, Norman L. (1960). Les Philosophes: The Philosophers of the Enlightenment and Modern Democracy. Edited with an Introduction by Norman L. Torrey. New York: Capricorn Books.
- Turnbull, Colin. (1981). East Africa safari. Natural History 5:26, 29-34.
- Turner, Bryan. (1991). Recent developments in the theory of the body. The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory. Eds. Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth, and

- Bryan Turner. London and Newbury Park, California:  
1991, pp.1-35.
- Uexküll, Jakob von. (1940). *The Theory of Meaning*.  
Special Issue of Semiotica (1982) 42: 1-82.
- Uexküll, Jakob von. (1934). A stroll through the worlds of  
animals and men. Instinctive Behavior: The Development  
of a Modern Concept (1957). Ed. C. H. Schiller. New  
York: International Universities Press, pp. 5-82.
- Uexküll, Jakob von. (1926). Theoretical Biology.  
Translated by D. L. MacKinnon. New York: Harcourt,  
Brace & Company.
- Uexküll, Thure von. (1982). Introduction: Meaning and  
science in Jakob von Uexküll's concept of biology.  
Semiotica 42: 1-24).
- Velasquez, Manuel, and Rostankowski, Cynthia, eds. (1985).  
Ethics: Theory and Practice. Englewood Cliffs, New  
Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Vestelen, Arne Johan. (1993). Perception, Empathy, and  
Judgment: An Inquiry into the Preconditions of Moral  
Performance. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State  
University Press.
- Walker, Stephen. (1983). Animal Thought. London:  
Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Wallace, Alfred Russel. (1890). Darwinism: An Exposition of the Theory of Natural Selection With Some of its Applications. London: Macmillan and Company.
- Wallace, Alfred Russel. (1870). Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection. London: Macmillan and Company.
- Wallace, Alfred Russel. (1869). Geological climates and the origin of species. Quarterly Review 126 (252), 359-394.
- Warren, Karen. (1987). Feminism and ecology: Making connections. Environmental Ethics 9: 3-21.
- Warren, Karen. J. (1990). The power and the promise of ecological feminism. Environmental Ethics 12 (2): 125-146.
- Watzlawick, Paul, Beavin, Janet, and Jackson, Don. (1967). Pragmatics of Human Communication. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Werhane, Patricia. (1995). Levinas's ethics: A normative perspective without metaethical constraints. Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion. Ed. Adriaan Peperzak. New York and London: Routledge.

- White, Andrew Dickson. (1896). A History of the Warfare of Science With Theology in Christendom. New York: Dover Publications, 1960.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. (1925). Science and the Modern World. New York: The Free Press.
- Wiener, Norbert. (1954). The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society (Second edition, revised). New York: Anchor Books.
- Wiley, Carol. (1991) Why it's impossible to be a vegetarian. Vegetarian Times 165, 59-62.
- Wilkie, J. S. (1973). Buffon, Lamarck and Darwin: The originality of Darwin's theory of evolution. Science and Religious Belief: A Selection of Recent Historical Studies. Ed. C. A. Russell. Great Britain: The Open University Press, pp. 239-281.
- Williams, Bernard. (1972). Rene Descartes. Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edited by Paul Edwards. New York and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers. Vol. II, pp. 344-354.
- Willis, Roy. (1990). The meaning of the snake. Signifying Animals: Human Meaning in the Natural World. Ed. Roy Willis. London: Unwin Hyman, 246-252.
- Willis, Roy. (1974). Man and Beast. Great Britain: Paladin.

- Wilson, Edward O. (1993). Biophilia and the conservation ethic. The Biophilia Hypothesis. Edited by Stephen R. Kellert and E. O. Wilson. Washington, D. C. and Covelo California: Island Press, 31-41.
- Wilson, Edward O. (1984). Biophilia. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press.
- Wilson, Edward O. (1978). On Human Nature. New York: Bantam Books.
- Wilson, Edward O. (1975). Sociobiology: The New Synthesis. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Wolfe, Alan. (1993). The Human Difference: Animals, Computers, and the Necessity of Social Science. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Wright, Tamra, Hughes, Peter, and Ainley, Alison. (1988). The paradox of morality: an interview with Emmanuel Levinas. The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other. Eds. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wyschogrod, Edith. (1995). The art in ethics: Aesthetics, objectivity, and alterity in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and

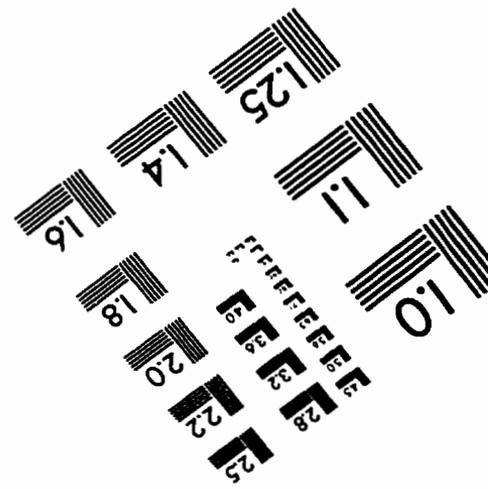
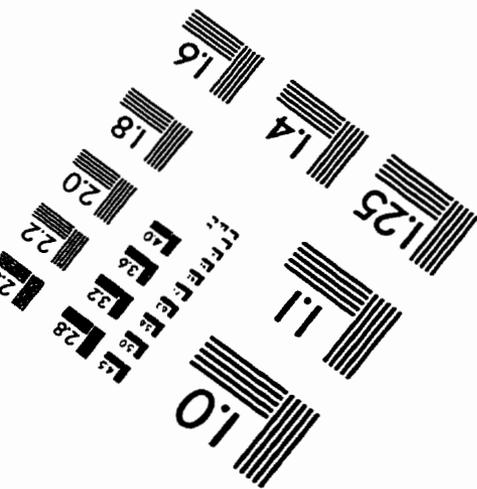
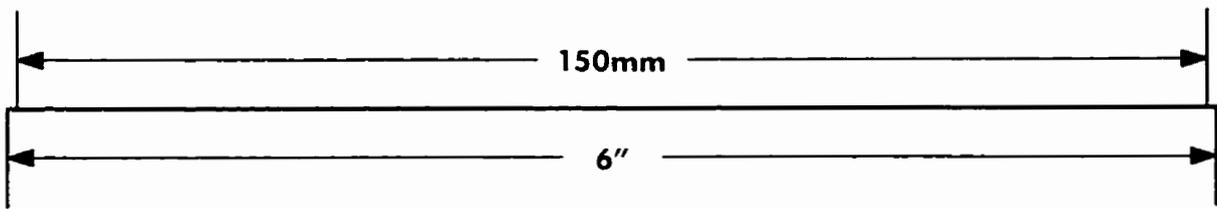
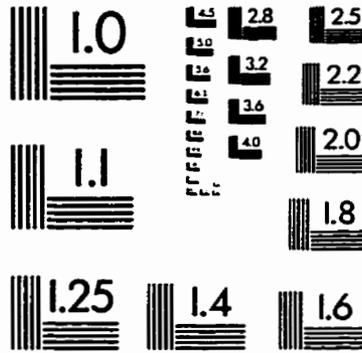
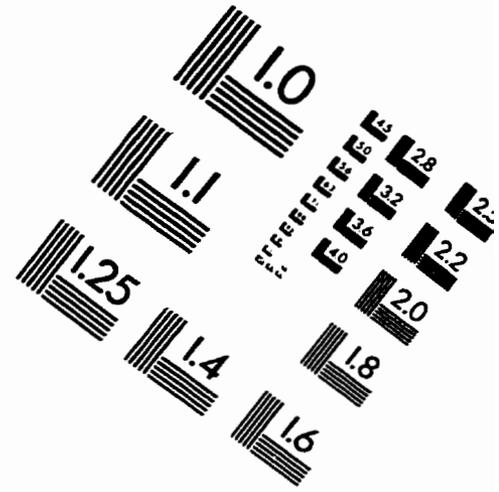
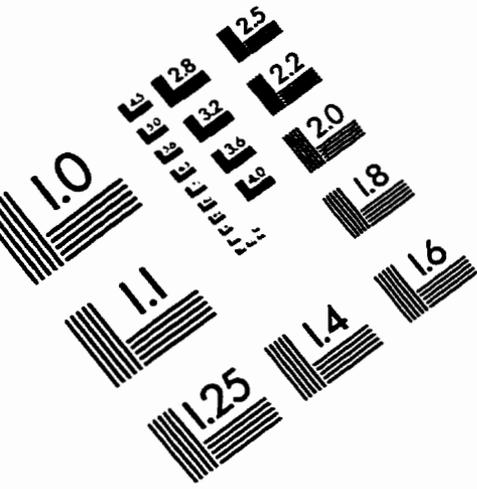
Religion. Ed. Adriaan Peperzak. New York and London:  
Routledge.

Young, Iris Marion. (1990). The ideal of community and the  
politics of difference. Feminism/Postmodernism. Ed.  
Linda J. Nicholson. New York and London: Routledge,  
pp. 300-323.

Young, Robert. (1972). Animal soul. Encyclopedia of  
Philosophy. Ed. Paul Edwards. New York: Macmillan.

Young, Robert. (1971). Darwin's metaphor: does nature  
select? The Monist 55, 442-503.

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



**APPLIED IMAGE . Inc**  
1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, NY 14609 USA  
Phone: 716/482-0300  
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc. All Rights Reserved