

The Emotional Lives of Animals: a Comparison between Researchers and Disciplines

Introduction

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‘Emotions’ is the key concept around which the essays collected in this first volume of *Relations* revolve. Animals’ emotions, as investigated and described by Marc Bekoff in his *The Emotional Lives of Animals* (2007), constitute the starting point for the authors. They set out to explore a series of aspects related to the relationships between humans and nonhuman animals: the phenomena of companion animals, animal experimentation, animal husbandry, animal advocacy, and so forth, paying attention to their philosophical, anthropological, theological, political, medical, and jurisprudential interpretations. The essays offer examples of the intersection of scientific attitudes and ethical concerns toward nonhuman animals. In *The Emotional Lives of Animals*, Marc Bekoff advocates for good science in which both scientific rigor and compassion coexist and proceed hand in hand. “In my own field I know that solid science can easily be done with ethics and compassion. [...] Science and the ethical treatment of animals aren’t incompatible. We can do solid science with an open mind and a big heart”, he writes (Bekoff and Goodall 2007, 24).

The aim of this first volume of *Relations* is to provide an answer to Bekoff’s call. It is to contribute to academic debate around nonhuman animal-related issues, which fosters ethical concern towards nonhumans and their plight.

As for the contents of this volume, in the first issue the authors define the consequences of the recognition of animal lives on laws and policies.

In his essay, *Sickness and Abnormal Behaviors as Indicators of Animal Suffering*, Michele Panzera concentrates on the recognition of animals' emotional lives and its consequences on animal husbandry. Moving from the ability of animals to perceive the states that reflect their welfare condition, he affirms they are alive, conscious, and sentient. As a consequence, the notion of good welfare inside animal husbandry is what could guarantee "animal integrity" – that is the possibility for animals to manifest their full "capacity", "not only those capacities that are 'convenient' for humans".

Paola Sobbrío offers both a complementary historical explanation and a critique of the EU legislation regarding animal welfare. In her work, *The Relationship between Humans and Other Animals in European Animal Welfare Legislation*, she notes that, even if animals are formally recognized as sentient beings, the legislation that follows this recognition is still human centered. "While the rhetoric of these laws seems to endorse the protection and welfare of animals as sentient beings, they actually allow for their enslavement and objectification", she writes. In fact, European animal welfare regulations allow very cruel practices that are completely in contrast with the recognition of their sentience.

Staying with the focus on advocacy, Kim Stallwood, in his essay *The Politics of Animal Rights Advocacy*, proposes the animal rights movement as the real opposition to the contemporary animal industrial complex and its entrenchments with the current public policy. He urges animal rights activists to move from the moral crusader strategy – and its emphasis on personal lifestyle choice – to "a long-term strategy which advances animal issues as public policy". For this reason, he proposes "a five-part evaluation process of social movements and use it to evaluate the modern animal rights movement" and advocates for a new strategy, operating on both the individual and social level.

In the second issue, the authors concentrate on specific application of the idea of the emotional lives of animals.

In her essay, *On Others' Emotions, and Ours: a Reflection on Narratives, Categories, and Heuristic Devices*, Sabrina Tonutti analyses, from an anthropological perspective, how the use of categories in addressing people's and nonhuman animals' lives can bias our understanding of them. Underlying the fact that categories "are not thirsty" and "do not suffer", while individual beings do, she therefore calls for a constant cognitive tension which can allow us (common people and researchers) to focus on real biographies and individuals, rather than classifications and categories, when dealing with social phenomena and ethical issues.

Our relationship with animals is the subject of Matteo Andreozzi's work. *Humans' Best Friend? The Ethical Dilemma of Pets* is an attempt to

reassess the moral status of pets, not just for an epistemological purpose but also as a step toward the moral rethinking of human-animal relationships. He investigates the moral implications of pet-keeping, including the “ethical dilemma of pets” from human-centered ethics and animal (partialist and impartialist) ethics. Refusing the former and accepting the latter, he suggests “the keeping of pets is not compatible with promoting the welfare of these (and other) animals”.

In *Human Relationship with Animals: Reading the Book of Tobit in the Light of Christian Tradition*, Gianfranco Nicora and Alma Massaro invite the reader to reflect upon the new model of companionship between a human being and a dog, as is represented in the apocrypha *Book of Tobit*. They argue the book constitutes a vision of a future era and that, even if still entrenched in the anthropocentric view particular to the ancient Jewish culture, “the reading of this story in the light of Jesus’ revelation confirms both that the union and brotherhood of humans and animals existed at the beginning of cosmic history and that it will come back in the new era”.

Susanna Penco and Rosella Ciliberti’s essay, *Ethics for the Living World: Alternative Methods and New Strategies for the Protection of Nonhuman Animals*, takes part in the debate on the post mortem donation. In fact, as they show, animal experimentation is still controversial since it is not clear if nonhuman animals are good models for humans. For this reason, the authors promote this kind of donation for the capital importance it could have for both nonhuman and human living beings. The authors state “diseases need to be cured and not only treated” and advocate that this kind of new research could lead “to the discovery of the causes of unknown etiological pathologies”.

The two issues provide not only studies and research contributions but also a debate between Marc Bekoff and Italian ethologist and philosopher Roberto Marchesini as well as reports, interviews and reviews.

In the section *Debate* Marc Bekoff and Roberto Marchesini tackle the issue of anthropomorphism and science. In his essay, *Animal Consciousness and Science Matter: Anthropomorphism Is not Anti-science*, Bekoff argues in favor of a “biocentric anthropomorphism” to guide scientists in their approach to the animal world and help them in gaining rigorous results which, in turn, support animal protection. In line with Bekoff’s ideas, Roberto Marchesini, in his writing *A Re-examination of Epistemological Paradigms Describing Animal Behavior in 8 Points*, tries to delineate “a new paradigm, which avoids all forms of epistemological anthropocentrism”.

In the section *Interviews* we find *Theory, Activism, and the Other Ways*, a conversation between Carol J. Adams and Adele Tiengo about the intersection between activism and theory, and, *We Are Made of Meat*, a

conversation between Matthew Calarco and Leonardo Caffo about what continental philosophy can add to the animal debate.

In this volume of *Relations* space is also given to the exhibition *Beauté Animale* (Paris, France, March 21st - July 16th, 2012) and to the second Minding Animals International Conference (Utrecht, The Netherlands, July 3rd-6th, 2012), as summarized and commented respectively by Eleonora Adorni and by Paola Fossati and Alma Massaro.

Two reviews close the volume: Eleonora Adorni's analysis of *Les Animaux Amoureux* (a full-length documentary by Laurent Charbonnier) and Alma Massaro's and Paola Sobbrío's review of Melanie Joy's book *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows*.

As a whole, this first volume of *Relations* invites people to reassess the emotional lives of animals from an interdisciplinary perspective. As the reader will notice, this volume does not illustrate only the negative side of our anthropocentrism, but also the richness of our cultures, which could be reread from an innovative point of view. Rethinking the emotional lives of animals could, indeed, lead us to rethink our relations with them, but also with us and with the whole nature. Always trying to proceed "with an open mind and a big heart", as Marc Bekoff claims (Bekoff and Goodall 2007, 24).

REFERENCES

- Bekoff, Marc, and Jane Goodall. 2007. *The Emotional Lives of Animals: a Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy – And Why They Matter*. Novato, CA: New World Press.