

Living with Companions: On the Peaceful Coexistence of Humans and Other Animals

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Abstract:

As a burgeoning research field, human-animal studies has extended into nearly all academic disciplines in the past few decades. The anthology published in the *Oxford Handbook* series in 2017 provides a nuanced while at the same time extensive overview of many of these recent endeavors. Five thematic sub-sections, including 30 individual contributions, compiled by animal studies authority Linda Kalof illustrate an array of paths to follow when attempting to answer questions about human-animal relations. Experts from diverse disciplines offer introductions and comprehensive bibliographies on specific research circling around animal ethics, agency, exploitation, ecosystems, and cultural representations, while conveying both overarching consensus as well as dissonance within the field. The handbook's only shortcoming is its slim section on animals in cultural representations, especially in terms of literature and other media.

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Kalof, Linda (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. 640 pages, 112.50 GBP. ISBN: 978-019992714.

Abstract:

As a burgeoning research field, human-animal studies has extended into nearly all academic disciplines in the past few decades. The anthology published in the *Oxford Handbook* series in 2017 provides a nuanced while at the same time extensive overview of many of these recent endeavors. Five thematic sub-sections, including 30 individual contributions, compiled by animal studies authority Linda Kalof illustrate an array of paths to follow when attempting to answer questions about human-animal relations. Experts from diverse disciplines offer introductions and comprehensive bibliographies on specific research circling around animal ethics, agency, exploitation, ecosystems, and cultural representations, while conveying both overarching consensus as well as dissonance within the field. The handbook's only shortcoming is its slim section on animals in cultural representations, especially in terms of literature and other media.

The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies (2017), edited by Linda Kalof, offers a comprehensive, graphic, and thought-provoking overview on the state of human-animal studies. Throughout its 30 contributions, categorized under five thematic sections focusing on animal ethics, agency, exploitation, ecosystems, and cultural representations, experts from diverse disciplines attempt to seek answers to the 'animal question:' How do we, as humans, need to change our relationship with other animals – regarding ethical standards and public policies, but also with respect to a more general change of heart – to enable a mutual flourishing on a damaged planet? Rather than clear answers, the contributions provide nuanced and mostly neutral overviews on their subject areas while managing to capture the heterogeneity of the field. Yet the controversies inherent to the 'animal question' cannot but spark an occasional dedication to the cause, so that major tensions within the field manifest along the way.

Part one opens right at the core of the debate: Gary Francione and Anna Charlton's "Animal Rights" portrays the dissonance within the animal rights movement. Pointing to the utilitarian nature of the 'animal welfare position,' they convincingly proclaim the more radical 'abolitionist approach' and with it "veganism as the *only* rational response to the idea that animals have moral value" (p. 37). Whereas some call for "humane slaughter methods," for example, abolitionists strictly reject all animal use (p. 35). Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka directly criticise this position in "Animals in Political Theory" and instead propose improvements to the detriments animals are facing in a contrastive but not any less radical way. They argue for granting citizenship rights to domesticated and sovereignty rights to wild animals, and to acknowledge free-living animals in close proximity to people – rats, pigeons, foxes, etc. – as adequately protected "denizens" (p. 51). Their desire to perceive animals as co-constituents of a multispecies society instead of breaking the human-animal bond entirely constitutes the underlying motivation here. Less radically, Josephine Donovan's chapter, "Interspecies Dialogue and Animal Ethics," argues for more attendance to the animals' wishes in the animal rights movement. Practicing 'interspecies dialogue,' the "capacity to feel oneself into another" by means of "attentive alertness, empathetic understanding and identification" (p. 214), could work towards overthrowing dominating ideologies that deny subjectivity to animals.

This advocacy of animal subjectivity marks the transition to part two of the handbook, which tackles the 'animal question' more abstractly. From ethological studies of cetaceans' cultural practices (Lori Marino), via historical analyses of war horses as historical agents co-shaping the past alongside humans (Chris Pearson), up to sociological studies on the emotional attachments of farmers to their livestock (Rhonda Wilkie), the essays in this section pursue one of the key quests in human-animal studies: Spreading the awareness that animals are active, conscious, and above all sentient actors with intentions and interests. "I know that I can never answer the questions," Erica Fudge admits in her essay "What Was It Like to Be a Cow?" but does not stop the animal studies historian from proposing an 'itstory' – an alternative to 'history,' which would pay more attention to the animals' perspective (p. 267). Basing her arguments on the philosophical work of Vinciane Despret and Donna Haraway, she argues that "the questions we ask produce the answers we get" (p. 269), which calls for finding new methods of inquiry when it comes to the animal. The past, Fudge emphatically argues, "is made of companions," a word derived from the Latin *cum panis* ('with bread'), and "if we change our position in relation to them perhaps we change our understanding of our shared realities" (p. 270).

Part three is dedicated to animal commodification resulting in their objectification and exploitation for science, pleasure, and above all for the food industry. Mike Michael depicts animals as 'scientific objects' and addresses how legal regulations can limit 'unnecessary' animal suffering. It seems doubtful, however, whether animals suffering in the name of science can ever be morally justifiable –

even if re-conceptualizing them as co-producers of the experiments, as Michael suggests. The same holds true for Paul B. Thompson's stance on a 'productive approach' to the ethics of food-animal production: Even if animal welfare policies have had positive impacts on the animals' conditions, the caveat to treat living beings as commodities cannot be overcome – an issue Thompson himself acknowledges.

Merely two chapters make up part four on the cultural representations of animals. Joe Zammit-Lucia's chapter draws attention to some shocking examples from 'animal-art,' which can entail the killing of an animal, such as Rick Gibson's performance contraption for crushing "Sniffy the Rat" (1989), which was supposed to do away with the animal in question, were it not impeded by animal rights activists. Zammit-Lucia criticizes the lack of regulations in the art world and argues for a more thoughtful criticism of art. Next to these visual animal representations, their textual appearances are featured in Sax's chapter, which traces animals in the early storytelling traditions of the Aesopian fable, the medieval bestiaries, and in early fairy tales while pointing to their non-anthropocentric tendencies. Unfortunately, the part ends here and does not provide any insights into animals as they appear in additional forms of literature, film or other media.

The handbook's last part on "Animals in Ecosystems" opens with Juliet Clutton-Brock's chapter on "Archaeozoology". Evaluating animal materials from archaeological sites in order to obtain knowledge on how people interacted with animals in the past can benefit contemporary animal management, so she argues (p. 477). Studying human-animal contact zones can be beneficial on both ends and does not need to be based on exploitation, as is convincingly pointed out in Terry O'Connor's chapter on "Commensal Species." In order to learn how to modify human settlements "in ways that will allow more species to adapt and sustain viable populations alongside us," O'Connor argues, records of past human-animal associations need to be studied. Contact to wildlife is rare and valuable in an increasingly urbanized society, and animals' adaptability to new living conditions in terms of resources and climate turns them into experienced teachers in an Anthropocene world of environmental crises. In order to foster more peaceful ways of coexistence in urban contexts, Marcus Owen and Jennifer Wolch show how 'green infrastructure' can work towards ethically considering animals in cities.

Human contact with other animals constitutes a both inevitable and highly valuable part of living in a globalized world. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies* examines these contacts and points to the responsibilities they entail. Yet the 'animal question' is an inherently complicated one, especially if looking at the diverging stances on domesticated animals. The continuum between wild, commensal, companion, domesticated, and livestock animals reveals that there is much room for discussion – a complexity which cannot be overlooked while perusing the anthology. The abolitionists' proposition

to get rid of all human interference with the animal world seems radical but morally appropriate; but not all human-animal relationships need to be exploitative. Offering an outlook for healthier collaboration, these varied voices constitute a valuable and timely authority to consider while venturing on an animal studies project – no matter from which discipline.

German Abstract:

Mit Gefährt_innen zusammen leben: Zur friedlichen Koexistenz von Menschen und anderen Tieren

In den letzten beiden Jahrzehnten hat sich das aufblühende Forschungsgebiet der Human-Animal Studies in nahezu alle akademischen Disziplinen ausgedehnt. Die 2017 veröffentlichte Anthologie der *Oxford Handbook* Serie verschafft einen differenzierten sowie ausführlichen Überblick über einige eben dieser jüngsten Bestrebungen. Animal Studies Expertin Linda Kalof stellt fünf thematisch gegliederte Sektionen mit insgesamt 30 einzelnen Beiträgen zusammen, in denen eine Vielzahl von möglichen Pfaden der Mensch-Tierforschung abgebildet wird. Wissenschaftler unterschiedlicher Disziplinen stellen im Handbuch Einführungen und ausführliche Bibliografien zu spezifischen Themenbereichen der Tierethik, -agentizität, und -ausbeutung, sowie zu Mensch-Tier Ökosystemen und zur kulturellen Tierrepräsentation bereit. Dabei bilden sich sowohl übergreifender Konsens als auch Dissonanzen deutlich heraus. Den einzigen Makel des Handbuchs stellt die relativ knappe Sektion zu Tieren in kulturellen Repräsentationen dar, besonders in Bezug auf die Literatur und andere Medien.

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