

Introduction to Volume IV, Issue I (2006)

I am delighted to introduce the fifth issue of the *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal*. As true of the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs as a whole, our peer-reviewed, online journal continues to grow as word of a dynamic new forum for critical animal theory and studies spreads among academics, activists, and others. As always, our featured essays are published for the first time in this journal, and thus are new and original contributions to the animal literature field.

This issue begins with a hard-hitting, gut-wrenching essay by Corey Lee Lewis that subverts the boundaries between theory and literature, fact and fiction, and reality and imagination. "Prairie Wolf" depicts how a young boy's connectedness to animals and the wild leads him later in life – in imagination or deed? – to undertake acts of sabotage in defense of animals and the earth against corporate exploiters. Along the way, Lewis paints a frightening picture of *Homo sapiens* as an exterminator species run amuck. He describes the casualties in the war waged against wildlife and nature (a war, of course, that humans ultimately wage against themselves), and emphasizes the devastating consequences of how animal agriculture has displaced species and colonized arable land wherever possible. Deep ecology meets radical ecotage in this compelling narrative.

With the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina now behind us, and the nation hardly better equipped to respond to similar disasters, Leslie Irvine's essay is timely and important. In "Animals in Disasters: Issues for Animal Liberation Activism and Policy," Irvine exposes the speciesist biases that underpin disaster rescue policies. These are revealed, for instance, in the forced separation of humans from their companion animals during rescue efforts in New Orleans and elsewhere, as well as media focus on human suffering that ignores the plight of animals. In the 1999 Hurricane Floyd, for instance, Irvine informs us that over 3 million companion and livestock animals died, and yet there was little reporting of this and other tragedies. Irvine also raises important questions regarding whether people in disaster-prone areas ought to have animals at all, given that many assume a natural right of animal "ownership" whatever the conditions or risks. Drawing from four case studies of emergency response and disaster relief policies, and using a number of methodological techniques and perspectives including personal experience, Irvine brings to light numerous problems that stem from federal government approaches (e.g., the "command and control" model), the policies of nonprofit organizations, and the use of untrained citizen volunteers in animal rescue efforts. She injects a critique of speciesism and rights perspective in a framework that, at best, is welfare-oriented. Importantly, Irvine also offers suggestions for improving disaster and rescue policies, and her recommendations deserve serious consideration from government agencies and animal welfare and rescue groups at national and local levels.

We continue with "Transparency and Animal Research Regulation: An Australian Case Study." In this searching analysis, Siobhan O'Sullivan examines the scientific community's attempt to grapple with increasing demands for more open review of animal research within an institution notorious for secrecy and that operates literally behind closed doors (indeed, many research centers are veritable armed compounds to defend against attacks from animal rights activists). While O'Sullivan's analysis focuses on Australia, similar debates are unfolding in the US and elsewhere. The demand for "transparent" research obviously stems from a welfare perspective that fails to question the legitimacy of *any* research under *any*

conditions. Yet, it signals an important start in the process of holding “scientists” accountable for what they do to animals, in an environment devoid of self-criticism, accountability, and meaningful oversight and enforcement of “animal welfare” regulations. O’Sullivan explores complexities in the debate over transparency, such that some researchers adamantly resist it while others welcome the opportunity – in their view – to debunk animal rights “disinformation” and educate the public about the importance of animal experimentation. Using original survey data, O’Sullivan shows that public understanding of animal research is poor, and that the vivisection community has so far failed to “open the laboratory door” in a meaningful way. One has to ask if vivisectionists are sincere about transparency or merely paying lip service to the ideal to diffuse scrutiny of their work. What, truly, is this community hiding from government and public alike? If they are so secure about their adherence to welfare regulations (where these exist at all) and the integrity of their work, why are the vast majority intent to hide behind concrete walls of secrecy? While the transparency question is debated both ways, there are certainly good grounds to conclude that if research laboratories had glass walls, outrage over animal abuse, absurd and heinous experiments, and flawed methodologies might reach a critical groundswell. However the public might decide the issue, they certainly cannot make an informed judgment without truth and transparency, and O’Sullivan rightly questions the compatibility of clandestine science with the demands of democracy and “open” societies.

Our last contribution features David Sztybel’s provocative and ambitious essay, “The Rights of Animal Persons.” This analysis is part of a larger project to develop a “new” theory of ethics adequate for grounding animal (and human) rights, one that overcomes the flaws in welfarism, various rights approaches, and feminist ethics of care (which emphasize cultivating concrete caring emotions and relations to animals rather than asserting abstract concepts such as rights and justice). Sztybel details various types of “harmful discrimination” against animals such as promoted and defended by speciesist reasoning. He forcefully exposes the arbitrary biases and double standards in the “special reasons” speciesists use in their attempt to justify treating animals differently from humans. The category of “mentally disabled humans” becomes relevant here, as speciesists argue that their justification of vivisection and other forms of exploitation – rooted in the claim that animals have inferior cognitive capacities to “normal adult humans” – does not also legitimate the same treatment of classes of “rationally impaired” humans. Sztybel argues that this rationale fails, and that speciesist approaches to moral theory jeopardize the rights of humans as well as animals. Appealing to the emotional, intellectual, and social complexity of animal lives, Sztybel argues that animals are “persons” and should be accorded appropriate legal rights of protection. He demonstrates that “animal welfare” – an oxymoronic, self-contradictory euphemism that legitimates extreme harm and discrimination – is more accurately viewed as “animal *illfare*.” After exposing the flaws in utilitarianism that allow exploitative treatment of animals when it benefits the “greater good,” Sztybel claims that major alternative ethical theories – including Immanuel Kant’s deontological ethics, John Rawls’ social contract theory, Tom Regan’s animal rights theory, and feminist ethics of care – are also inadequate for the task of formulating an adequate “animal liberation ethic.” Incorporating key advantages of existing theories, while dispensing with their main disadvantages, Sztybel constructs a “new” theory he calls “best caring ethics.” Thus, with reference to Kant, utilitarianism, and feminist ethics of care, in addition to his own emphases, Sztybel’s approach offers “a revised theory of ends in themselves, a distinctive theory of what is best, a theory of emotional cognition, and a set of arguments for animal personhood.”

Finally, we are pleased to introduce a new Book Review feature of the *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal*, and we conclude with two commentaries on recent works in animal ethics and studies. First, Lisa Kemmerer reviews Marc Bekoff's book, *Animal Passions and Beastly Virtues*. Kemmerer discusses Bekoff's passion for animals which led him to become one of the leading cognitive ethologists, and credits him for writing about potentially dry topics in a lively and stimulating way. As she describes, Bekoff argues not only that animals have sophisticated thoughts and emotions, but also a sense of fairness and morality. Kemmerer focuses on a key moral tension, however, whereby well-intentioned scientific curiosity often interferes with the lives of animals and may cause them harm. Next, Richard Kahn offers a critical reading of a new collaboration between Peter Singer and Jim Mason, *The Way We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter*. Whereas the book advantageously focuses on the positive impact consumers can have on animal welfare, the environment, and their own health, Kahn finds that Singer and Mason fail to adequately confront the social and economic forces driving agribusiness, as well as the race and class dynamics that help to shape whether one is likely to eat at McDonald's or Whole Foods. According to Kahn, their baseline appeal to citizens to at least become "conscientious omnivores" who support humane and sustainable agriculture swings too far from the normative demands for animal liberation towards a "mass marketable animal welfarism" that fails to transcend the limits set by global capitalism.

In addition to original essays, we invite our readers to submit review of new works in animal ethics and studies. Those interested in reviewing a book for publication for a future issue are encouraged to contact our Book Review Editor, Richard Kahn (rvkahn@ucla.edu), who can provide further details and arrange to send an examination copy of the text. On behalf of the *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal*, and the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs, I hope you find this new issue stimulating, challenging, and useful.

Steven Best
Chief Editor