

## Book Reviews:

### *Animals and their Moral Standing* by Stephen R.L. Clark. New York: Routledge, 1997.

This collection of self-selected essays, all previously published (with some revision), presents work of Clark's from 1978 through 1994. The essays are engaging, often poetic, but philosophically demanding. They illustrate Clark's unique approach to the animal welfare debate. A metaphysical realist about moral and mental properties, Clark fights the current trend toward skepticism and relativism with a Moorean common sense while urging the reader to recognize the valuable epistemological role that human sentiments (moral and otherwise) play in justifying the judgments that we make about our moral community. Clark's essays invite the reader to engage in the moral exercise of recognizing the role that creatures play in our moral lives and the trustworthiness of the sentiments that lead us to invite them into our household. These are the sentiments that form the foundation of the cosmic democracy that Clark envisions. Clark brings an honest humility to his writing as he tackles a difficult subject, and, writing from a Christian perspective, creates for himself a difficult (because diverse) audience. Moreover, his ability to bring together contemporary sociobiology, ancient and modern philosophical perspectives, and theological perspectives is quite remarkable. The result is a collection of essays that will be of interest to the veteran as well as the newcomer to the animal welfare debate.

The most recent of the essays "Modern Errors, Ancient Virtues" provides a nice summary of the ideas that unite many of the essays in this collection. Clark reminds the reader that those engaged in morally questionable practices using non human animals operating on a set of false assumptions deeply ingrained in contemporary (human) culture: Egocentrism, the view that the world is essentially our construct and we are the center of that world; Humanism, the view that the only species deserving of moral respect is the human species, and this, because its members are the unique embodiment of reason; Utilitarianism, the view that while non human sentient beings might deserve some moral respect, the good that comes from ignoring them is justified in the name of the overall good; Objectivism, the view that we regulate our feelings and behavior not by conventional and changing concepts but by the natural or real division of things.

The other essays in the collection offer more elaborate, suggestive attacks on some of these assumptions.

"How to Calculate the Greater Good" and "Ethical Problems in Animal Welfare" may be the least interesting for veterans of the field, but most helpful for newcomers. Here Clark presents and critically examines the key concepts and normative theories that have defined the animal welfare debate. His critique of Utilitarianism, based on its epistemological inadequacies, sets the stage for his appeal to a "cosmic democracy" established and reinforced by our emotional, moral responsiveness as human animals. "Cosmic democracy" the

idea that the moral sensibility that binds us to our children and pets must be extended to the whole earth, is further elaborated in "Utility, Rights and Domestic Virtues" and "Animals, Ecosystems and the Liberal Ethics."

"The Rights of Wild Things" and "Hume, Animals and the Objectivity of Morals" also provide a wonderful introduction to some of the key issues in the debate and Clark's realism about morality concerning the animal kingdom. In the former Clark examines D.H. Ritchie's reductio that granting natural rights to animals will force us to the ridiculous conclusion that we must protect animal prey against predators who wrongly violate the victim's rights. Clark responds by essentially embracing Ritchie's conclusion and showing the reader why common sense and moral sentiment support this view. Emotional responsiveness to the life and pain of human animals warrants our protection of both human and non human animals, especially against predators who prey not out of necessity but enjoyment. The strength of our commitment is a function of their membership in our household - a membership warranted by the advantages we gain from them. However, no one would require someone to protect a right if it violated other duties, or made things worse by protecting it, or interfered with another whose predatorial actions were based on need not greed. So while rights may obligate us to protect, it doesn't obligate us to protect unconditionally.

The most suggestive and bold idea that emerges in these two essays is that a predator's actions are susceptible to moral evaluation. This thesis emerges partly in response to Hume's challenge that a moral realist cannot consistently treat non animal incest as the same act as human incest, while making different moral attributions. Clark, in keeping with his view that we can attribute a mental life to animals, suggests that the animal's action is condemnable - even if the animal does not recognize it as such.

Another group of essays illustrate Clark's attack on the implausible assumptions that he believes have a grip on the philosophical, literary, and scientific establishment: that we need to distinguish between the factual or natural world that science investigates, and the value-laden, prescriptive judgments that we make on the basis of our emotional response to it. Clark's attack involves two related theses, one metaphysical, one epistemological. He defends the epistemological thesis, namely that we do not infer the presence of these mental capacities and moral ties, but rather directly see them in virtue of our emotional responsiveness as animals and loving attention as scientists most clearly, in "Awareness and Self-awareness," "Humans, Animals and Animal Behavior," and "The Description and Evaluation of Animal Emotion." In the essay "Awareness and Self-awareness" Clark argues that linguistic self-ascription is not the only sign of self-awareness. As animals we are equipped to recognize self-awareness; we do this not through inference but by identifying the same non-linguistic behavior that we use to identify self-awareness among humans. For example, we observe how one locates oneself in space, re-identifies individuals as individuals instead of mere occupants of a role, and we observe the degree of commitment and admitted responsibility to others. In addition to awareness, animals have perceptions, projects, and interests all of which form the basis for their membership in the moral community. In "Humans, Animals and Animal Behavior" Clark examines the traditional con-

nection between animal welfare and asceticism where animals gain protection on the basis of disassociating reason from passion or animal concerns. Clark's argument is that any morality that systematically denigrates and denies its own roots in ethical responsiveness is doomed. In "The Description and Evaluation of Animal Emotion" Clark further defends the epistemological role of human responsiveness by examining Spinoza's challenge that emotion in animals is essentially different from humans and Howard Liddell's use of the descriptive/evaluative distinction to emphasize the limits of emotion attribution to animals. Clark's response is to address the implications of ignoring our sentiments: either we detect a part of the nature of the animal through our response to their "manifestation of emotions" or these responses are defective because their mental lives are completely alien to us. But their mental lives are not alien to us. We train them, we communicate with them sufficiently enough to feel comfortable with our interactions with them. This argument, while compatible with the fact that we could be mistaken, is reason enough to grant that our responsiveness provides knowledge about some aspect of their nature.

The epistemological role of our responsiveness appears again in the essays where Clark defends a metaphysical realism about folk psychology and morality. In "The Reality of Shared Emotions" and "The Consciousness of Animals" Clark addresses two standard views, that either reject the truth of our prescriptive judgments (material eliminativists) or reduce the truth of such judgments to a matter of what we are willing to countenance at the time (anti-realist or post-modernists). Both, as Clark rightly points out, deny that our moral and psychological concepts have a hold in reality. Clark attacks both views on three fronts. 1. Both views ignore the history of our concepts: our concepts are grounded in reality in virtue of our interacting with the world, as human beings. Consequently, while some may be less appropriate than others, conventional "value laden" concepts are as much a part of that reality as the "natural" or "scientific." 2. The skeptic's claim that even if we interact with the world, we may not have an appropriate understanding of the concepts as they apply to non humans is no reason to think that there is no way to apply them, or that we can only apply them metaphorically. We may very well never know what it is like to be a wasp, for example, but functional similarity is enough to bring one into the moral universe. 3. Not only is impersonal science impossible at a global level (scientists for some time have admitted the impossibility of eliminating all reference to an inner life in order to describe and explicate animal behavior), but it may be scientifically inappropriate if the project of discovery is taken seriously. For our emotions are not merely mechanisms of "projections" but can discover something that impartial reason may not. As Clark repeatedly reminds the reader: our success at training animals by acknowledging the importance of emotional reward and punishment seems evidence enough.

Clark's essays are intellectually demanding and rich with philosophical creativity, insight, and argument. Of course there is much to question and challenge as a result of this richness. For instance, Clark's appeal to the notions of "natural law" and of an animal's "natural life" in order to defend why we must not only refrain from cruelty, but killing as well, raises serious questions. For instance, can autonomy or desire for sacrifice or concern for suffering override

that right to adhere to its nature? Can its nature be determined by our conventions (e.g. breeding laboratory mice for research)? Are we allowed to change its nature for the benefit of genetic research? I can imagine two other obvious challenges that might emerge from opponents and sympathizers. I think some zoophiles may well be frustrated with these essays feeling that he has not done enough. While he most certainly addresses the skeptics and those who are not willing to recognize, as he puts it, the “easy duty” to refrain from violating rights, he doesn’t do much by way of guiding us with the more difficult duties, settling those conflicts we confront once we recognize a cosmic democracy, telling us what sympathies to trust, what moral discriminations or “exclusions” we must make. But I suspect that Clark will simply argue that this problem is no different from the problems faced by the speciesist when dealing with conflicting duties and sympathies involving humans of differing capacities and interests. As for the difficult duties, I suspect he would offer an Aristotelian view: who one helps and to what extent and when, will depend on the nature of the individual and his or her capacities and position.

One objection I anticipate from philosophers, regardless of their sympathies, is that Clark fails to address more sophisticated forms of Utilitarianism and Emotivism. While this is true, the kind of strategy he employs may cut against both traditional and more sophisticated versions of these views. Indeed, what I enjoyed most in Clark’s responses to his opponents is what some readers will find annoying, and most certainly question-begging: his common sense responses to skepticism and relativism. While this collection of essays will serve the student interested in the particular topic of animal welfare, it is also a brilliant illustration of common sense philosophy in the tradition of Aristotle, Thomas Reid, G.E. Moore, and, most recently, John McDowell. Anyone who questions the contribution of traditional philosophy to modern ethics or current science would do well to spend time with this book.

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