

Ethics, Animals and Science

K Dolan (1999). Published by Blackwell Science Ltd, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0EL, UK; <http://www.blackwell-science.com>. Distributed by Marston Book Services Ltd, P O Box 269, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4YN, UK. 287 pp. Paperback (ISBN 0 632 05277 5). Price £26.50.

This book, from a distinguished academic publisher, is likely to be widely read by people in the research community who wish to have some understanding of arguments for and against the use of animals in scientific procedures. It is therefore a pity that it does not live up to its potential. Lesley Grayson's *Animals in Research: For and Against* is a far more valuable, balanced offering.

We are told that the book 'is not an apology for any specific attitude to animal experimentation, and presents and comments on a number of opinions and arguments'. That the author chooses to thank the Imperial Cancer Research Institute, the Laboratory Animal Science Association, the Research Defence Society (which, he several times informs us, does 'valiant service') and the Institute of Animal Technology may perhaps raise a suspicion that he is not quite so neutral an observer — a suspicion not entirely quelled by his reference to 'the vast amount of literature' published by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare. In fact, the book *is* an apology (in the older sense): a defence of animal experimentation when that is conducted under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act as enforced by the United Kingdom's Home Office Inspectorate, and a flat rejection of the challenge to human culture mounted by some philosophers.

The opening section (pp 1–109) is a brief and unfortunately misleading history of (Classical, Mediaeval and Modern Anglophone) moral philosophy. Philosophers are said to disagree completely about first-order moral judgements, to be dedicated rather to second-order enquiry into the possible meaning and justification of terms like 'good', and to affirm 'the principle of verification' (declaring that all supposed judgements which cannot be verified are meaningless). This may have been — broadly — plausible, in England, in the 1950s, but times change even for philosophers. Passing comments on what one or other philosopher of the past has said (Descartes, for example, is said to have been certain only of his own existence) are far more contentious than the author realises (the comment on Descartes, indeed, is actually and flatly *false*: he considered it impossible to doubt either that he himself existed or that there was a truth infinitely greater than any idea he had of it; he also felt himself entitled to believe a great many other things). Readers should be warned that — as an account of recent work in moral, or more general, philosophy — Dolan's account is seriously flawed. Amongst the terms that are used without due care are 'taboo', 'absolutism' (equated with fanatical approval of one impulse amongst many) and 'intuitionism' (equated with the production of uncritical and unrealistic solutions to moral dilemmas). A J Ayer is referred to throughout as 'A J Ayers' (and apparently without realising that he had long repudiated most of his early arguments). John Rawls is identified as 'an ethicist' who wrote a book called *The Cry of Justice* to present the 'neglected theory' of a 'primitive social contract' on 'a theoretical level'. For the record: the book was *The Theory of Justice*, Rawls is not 'an ethicist', and the thought experiment he employs (bargaining behind a veil of ignorance) was not propounded as the model for *all* moral judgement. Kant's notion of 'the categorical imperative', so Dolan says, 'fitted in well with authoritarian culture', and 'goes wrong' when it is presented as 'the *only* morality' (perhaps it does — but Kant's position is so far from being authoritarian that he denounces all forms of heteronomy: it would be wrong to do anything merely because one had been *told* to do it). Democritean

atomism is said to be deterministic (notoriously, it is not). ‘Very early matriarchies’ (for which we have no evidence at all) ‘may have been due to a surprising ignorance amongst the primitive hunter-gatherers, of the biology of reproduction’ (*sic*: pp 101) — for which we also have no evidence. In brief: Part I is often credulous, inaccurate and misleading. Anyone with a serious interest in the actual history of recent moral philosophy, or what Dolan calls ‘obtuse notions of ethics’ (he may possibly mean ‘abstruse’), would be immensely better served by Alastair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*. These errors matter: naïve readers could only conclude from Dolan’s brief history that most philosophers are deranged, and that philosophy therefore offers no rational challenge at all to anything. This is, at the least, one-sided. Philosophy is the serious attempt to think through and past conventional or revolutionary opinion — opinion which itself is often historically derived from some past philosopher’s reasoned discourse.

In Part II (pp 111–163), Dolan turns to the treatment of non-human animals. Only Peter Singer and Tom Regan are cited as philosophers in favour of seeking to give non-human animals something like the protection we require for human animals (Andrew Linzey and Bernard Rollin get brief, dismissive mentions for related ideas). Dolan is admirably sure that ‘it would seem to be beyond dispute’ that ‘we are morally obliged to make up whatsoever [an] animal lacks due to our use of it’ (p 138) — but seems not to follow through the implications of this very radical statement. He is also confident that ‘animals’ feel pain, but that ‘pain as such’ may not be the only factor to be considered (‘animal life is of value in and of itself’ [p 162]), and we should hesitate to kill animals even when we do so painlessly. ‘Animal rights campaigners’, he says, ‘tend to be coy’ about the detailed realisation of the rights they claim for animals — but he is hardly less coy himself (and might have corrected his judgement by wider reading).

In Part III (pp 165–279), Dolan describes the advantages that animals have gained from domestication, and the importance of animal experimentation for medical progress. ‘Antivivisectionists’ appear in this part solely as purveyors of misinformation. Suddenly the very same animals whose lives are valuable ‘in and of themselves’ and who are owed immediate compensation for every loss that we impose upon them are back to being treated as consumables. Because far more animals are killed for food, laboratory experimentation, apparently, is not to be deplored. Because a few animal rights activists harass or threaten scientists, and the Nazis — allegedly — attempted to outlaw animal experimentation, there is no real need to consider the actual arguments. Dolan complains about ‘the dialogue of the deaf’ between people with pre-formed opinions: but the only *examples* of such prejudice he offers are from ‘antivivisectionist’ literature, and his solution is that scientists should ‘go on the offensive’, not that they should themselves actually *listen*. Dolan seems confident that a ‘cost–benefit analysis’ can be used to justify particular invasive experiments (though of course we won’t feel *happy* about them), but nowhere addresses the serious questions that have been raised about such analyses (for example, by La Follette and Shanks, in *Brute Science*).

This review should not be wholly negative. In the final chapters, Dolan provides some detailed information about the sorts of alternative to animal experimentation that are currently available, differing criteria for a judgement on animal welfare, the different versions of cost–benefit analysis that have been proposed, and the pros and cons of Ethical Review Committees. A concluding, unsystematic and incomplete bibliography contains rather more reading, of a more serious nature, than is cited in the main text. The author, and his editors, should certainly have sought advice in areas outside his field of competence, and might then have produced a better book. The errors and confusions I have mentioned are not

wholly deplorable: they may themselves be an incentive to further thought and study. And though his scholarship and his arguments are faulty, some of the author's personal intuitions about the value of animals' lives may be correct.

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The Domestic Duck

C and M Ashton (2001). Published by The Crowood Press Ltd, The Stable Block, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury, Marlborough, Wilts, UK. E-mail: enquiries@crowood.com. 192 pp. Hardback (ISBN 1 86126 402 X). Price £19.95.

The Domestic Duck is divided into three parts. The first part covers the breeds of ducks, their history and their characteristics. The second part covers the behaviour and management of adult ducks and includes chapters on the physiology and behaviour of the mallard and the management of adult ducks. The third part of the book covers the breeding of ducks and the rearing of ducklings. The book ends with an appendix of health problems in ducks and practical solutions to their prevention and treatment, useful addresses in the waterfowl management industry, and a bibliography of popular and scientific books on duck breeds and their management.

Throughout the book, the primary focus is the breeding of ducks, as the target market is clearly duck breeders and exhibitors. This theme is taken up from the start, as the book traces the history of the domestication of the duck, and the characteristics of the classic breeds and their various uses by man. The early chapters include sections on egg layers, such as India Runner ducks; table or meat birds, such as the Aylesbury from Britain, the Rouen from France and the Pekin from China; and Call ducks, which were used as decoys by wild-fowling and duck hunters. It then proceeds to cover the development of 'designer' breeds in the 20th century, when breeds from around the world were crossed to select for the best features from each, such as the prolific egg-laying Khaki Campbell, the dual purpose Orpington or the decorative Magpie duck. In addition to many black and white illustrations, the two chapters are well supported by eight pages of colour pictures of the various breeds and cover in great detail the genetics of the breed characteristics.

The book goes on to describe the selection and management of adult stock and the breeding and rearing of ducklings. First is a description of the behaviour and physiology of the mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and related dabbling ducks, which are the ancestors of all types of domestic duck except the Muscovy duck. This is followed by chapters providing practical advice on the selection of stock and the care and management of adult ducks in small flocks. The final chapters cover the selection of breeding stock, the incubation of eggs and the rearing of ducklings in small-scale systems. No single section of the book specifically deals with the welfare of the domestic duck; instead, welfare issues are dealt with through advice on the management of duck flocks throughout the book. The sections of the book that are most relevant to welfare are: the chapter on physiology and behaviour of mallards, which covers the fundamental physical requirements of dabbling ducks; the chapter on the management of adult ducks, which covers provision of food, water and shelter as well as protection from disease, adverse weather conditions and predators; and the chapter on the rearing of ducklings. In addition to covering care, health and welfare of young ducks, this chapter includes recommendations on the humane slaughter of ducklings. Finally, the