

## Editors' Introduction

### Extending the Boundaries of "The Ethical"

I also think that quite clearly, even if it is not as simple as that, even if animals are not considered as human beings, the ethical extends to living beings. I really think so.

—Emmanuel Levinas, "The Animal Interview"

Since the topic of Levinas and animals has by now received rather a lot of attention, the reader may be wondering why we felt compelled to compile this volume of essays. The short answer is that though Levinas's neglect of animals in his philosophical work has already been subject to repeated criticism,<sup>1</sup> the majority of commentators and critics still write as though Levinas's "profound anthropocentrism and humanism"<sup>2</sup> rather than a serious flaw in need of remedy, were entirely justified. Most take it for granted that it is not possible for the Other to be anything other than human. Only posterity knows whether this will ever change, though it looks unlikely that it will. This is not due to any deficiencies in the arguments for including animals within the scope of Levinas's ethics. It is probably because the force behind the conviction that humans are the center of the moral universe is more affective than philosophical, and wells from the same source as what Freud called "the universal narcissism of men." But even if a single collection of essays like this one is unlikely to make much of a difference here, it behooves us as academics to keep reminding ourselves that the animal question is a live one and as long as an ethics like Levinas's does not take the question into account, then so much the worse for it philosophically.

In order to contextualize Levinas's approach to animal ethics, we present below a brief synopsis of approaches to animal ethics in Western philosophy. However, before turning to that discussion, we begin with an introduction to

a new digitized transcription and English translation of the most relevant text in Levinas's corpus: "The Animal Interview" (see chapter 1).

### The Animal Interview: New Digitized Transcription and English Translation

In the summer of 1986, three MA students at the University of Warwick, in the UK, traveled to Paris to interview Levinas at his home at rue Michel-Ange in the sixteenth arrondissement. Alison Ainley, Peter Hughes, and Tamra Wright were members of a graduate reading group that had been meeting on a regular basis throughout the academic year, focusing on *Totality and Infinity*. The interview had originally been planned as an informal discussion, but at the suggestion of David Wood, who was at the time in the process of editing, with Robert Bernasconi, *The Provocation of Levinas*, the students decided to record and transcribe the interview, with the hope of its appearance in that volume of essays. The team collected questions from members of the *Totality and Infinity* reading group, and from other faculty and students in the Department of Philosophy at Warwick.

Much to the surprise of everyone involved in the project at the time, the interview, which was published by Routledge under the title "The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas" (*PM*), attracted a wide readership and has become an important resource for researchers; indeed, it has recently been cited by one scholar as Levinas's "famous interview with students at the University of Warwick in 1986."<sup>3</sup> Much of the interest in the article can be attributed to the fact that it is one of the very few places where Levinas discusses responsibility for nonhuman animals at some length.

Given the scholarly interest in this interview, particularly the animal sections, *and the fact that it was only ever published in translation*, we decided that the time is ripe for a full transcription and new translation of those parts of the interview that relate to animals. In the process of retranscribing and translating this material, we have discovered various errors in the original version. The original recording was made without the benefit of any specialist equipment (the interview was recorded on a household cassette recorder!), making transcription itself challenging, and this was further complicated by Levinas's habit of jumping from one question to another in his responses, and occasionally leaving sentences unfinished. Additionally, unaware that scholars would eventually want to weigh every nuance of Levinas's answers to the questions about animal ethics, the translators, Andrew Benjamin and Tamra Wright, opted for avoiding a full, literal translation of those sections of the interview, and attempted instead to convey Levinas's thoughts in a more coherent and accessible way.

The cassette recording was encoded as an MP3 and digitally remastered by Dr. Stewart Brookes, a medieval scholar and specialist in digital humanities (as well as a committed vegetarian) at King's College London, using Audacity open-source software. Unfortunately, even after the application of multiple filters to remove background noise, there remained a few moments in the interview when it was not possible to make out what was being said. This may be due to degradation of the original cassette tape, but it could also be because of the low quality of the original recording equipment, and the fact that Levinas from time to time spoke very softly or turned his head too far away from the microphone. Nevertheless, we ended up overall with a very accurate and scholar-friendly transcript to work from in producing the translation that is included in this volume, and has been referred to by the contributors.

Interviews are a good way to try to make philosophical ideas available to a more general audience, though inevitably they give rise to oversimplification.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding that the questions in the interview were translated into French and sent to Levinas in advance, it is probably safe to say Levinas relied on certain impromptu formulations rather than giving detailed elaboration and careful expression to what he wanted to say. Perhaps the most poignant illustration of this is the claim that is likely to leave some readers of Levinas scratching their heads: ". . . the ethical extends to living beings."

Levinas does not specify whether he is referring to the aggregate of "living beings" (*vivants*) or only a subset. If the former, then this would suggest that we have obligations not only to animals, but also to plants, fungi, bacteria, and perhaps even viruses! While there may indeed be Levinasian grounds for expanding the moral circle beyond sentient life to encompass the nonhuman world in general, laying the foundations for a robust environmental ethics,<sup>5</sup> judging from the context it seems more likely that Levinas meant to restrict the claim to animals that are sentient or capable of suffering. Thus, he is saying that we have obligations to animals that can suffer. This would explain his dismissal of the idea that a flea has what he calls a face (a remark that was omitted from the original interview), presumably because insects are not generally considered to be sentient.

One of the more infelicitous errors that crept into the original translation of the interview was the insertion of the adjective "all" in the above ("the ethical extends to all living beings" [*PM*, 172]). Several other key changes from the original version of the interview are as follows: "One cannot entirely refuse a dog the face" (in place of "One cannot entirely refuse the face of an animal" [*PM*, 169]); "What an insuperable line!" [*Quel trait noir!*] (not included in original version); "Not in the flea, for example. The flea! It's an insect, which jumps, eh?" [*laughter*] (not included in original version); "One always loves in the animal, the wolf, the memory of the wolf, the memory of the lion, the dog, I don't know.

In any case, there is there the possibility of a specific phenomenological analysis, which cannot be used when things are understood from the beginning. There are some forms of animal. . . . There are certainly, I don't know, vegetarians—those who [are in] the animal protection league; that exists. Clearly, one [approach to] ethics is the transference of the idea of suffering to an animal, certainly" (not included in original version); "Because there are people who will tell you, on the contrary, that it is in life that there is a certain sympathy regarding our life and that ethical morality is a development of a purely biological phenomenon—that's it" (not included in original version); "It is a widespread thesis saying ultimately the human is but the culmination of the animal" (in place of "The widespread thesis that ultimately the ethical is biological amounts to saying that, ultimately, the human is only the last stage of the evolution of the animal" [*PM*, 172]); "I am telling you that because to say that saintliness begins with animals implies that animals have already heard the word of God—which makes no difference to me. But, in any case, there is something other than pure Being that persists in being" (not included in original version).

While we believe the new transcription/translation more accurately represents Levinas's views on animals than the one that was done thirty years ago, it nevertheless should be kept in mind that the complete translation of the *original* interview was sent to Levinas for his approval prior to publication, as had been agreed with him beforehand. At the very least we can say that the interview merits reading as a work of fresh philosophical importance, even today, for the views on animals expressed there are not to be found anywhere in Levinas's major works. It would be a gross mistake to consider Levinas's remarks on animals as mere *orbiter dicta*, or exotic remarks that can easily be ignored. The reason why the interview needs to be read is for the critical challenge it presents to Levinas's "humanism of the other man," especially when taken in conjunction with Levinas's remarks about the unknowability and inscrutability of the Other. It certainly doesn't answer every question that a philosopher interested in the moral status of animals would want answered. Nor does it constitute anything like a complete (or even fully coherent) train of philosophical thought. However, the editors' suspicions are (1) that many of the views on animals expressed in the interview serve as an important counterweight to Levinas's almost exclusive focus on human beings in such works as *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise Than Being*; (2) that any philosophical discrepancies that emerge between what Levinas says in the interview about animals and what he says in his major works are in fact evidence of a real (rather than merely apparent) tension between Levinas's unquestionable (and perhaps unquestioned) humanism and the wider implications of his ethical theory; and (3) that Levinas's ethics is arguably the best placed among ethical theories, with the exception of

Benthamite utilitarianism, to accommodate the interests and moral consideration of various nonhuman animals.

### Brief History of the Status of Animals in Philosophy

For the majority of Western history, philosophers have excluded nonhuman animals from the moral community. The first philosopher to argue that justice does not apply to animals was Aristotle (383–322 BCE). According to Aristotle, nature is organized hierarchically, with humans at the top of the pyramid due to their possession of reason (*logos*). Nonhuman animals, entirely lacking in reason, and thus incapable of ruling themselves, are naturally inferior to humans and subordinate to human interests. Animals are not our equals, they cannot be our friends, and no relations of justice exist between them and us. On the contrary, they are natural slaves.

When Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) set out to synthesize the philosophy of Aristotle and the teachings of the Roman Church, he had no difficulty showing how the argument purporting to establish the inferiority of animals was entirely consonant with the Judeo-Christian viewpoint that man is made in the image of God, and granted “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28). According to Aquinas, God is an absolutely perfect being who is also an absolutely rational being. We therefore have moral duties to God and to any other terrestrial beings that are sufficiently like him. Only human beings are sufficiently like God because only human beings possess reason. Thus, human beings have duties only to God and each other, to the exclusion of other animals that lack reason.

These ideas continued through the Renaissance and the European Enlightenment. The father of modern philosophy, René Descartes (1596–1650), not only asserted that animals are not rational; he denied that they are even conscious, relegating them to the rank of mere automata, or machines. Since animals do not have souls or the capacity to feel pain, there is no reason why we should not do with them as we please. This was just what the Enlightenment scientists wanted to hear at a time (ca. 1600) when anatomy was starting to play an important role in medicine and research. From now on, dogs would be vivisected in anatomy lessons, sometimes having their vocal cords severed to silence the shrieks of the animal-machine.

While the description of the animal as a machine provided scientifically minded Cartesians with a clear conscience when it came to experimenting on animals, it also presented a serious philosophical problem. If the animal

is only a machine, one whose behavior can be explained mechanistically, why not also characterize human beings as machines and explain their behavior the same way? The leading German Enlightenment philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), provided a solution of sorts. For Kant, animals are like us to the extent that they are conscious and feel pain, but unlike us to the extent that they are not rational and free. Inasmuch as animals are not rational and free, they are excluded from the moral community, which, according to Kant, is populated only by beings (God, angels, and human beings) that are capable of moral agency. Unlike Descartes, however, Kant did not argue that we are morally entitled to do anything we want to other animals. On the contrary, to the extent that animals, as sentient beings, are capable of feeling pain, then we ought to treat them, if not with respect (“respect always applies to persons only”), then at least with some moral consideration. But this obligation is only a duty *regarding* animals (i.e., one that affects animals), not a duty *to* animals. Kant calls it an “indirect” duty to humans, since its performance is said to make it more likely that we will perform our duty to each other. If we treat animals badly, then we are prone to become indifferent to human suffering as well.

It was only when Charles Darwin (1809–1882), in the middle of the nineteenth century, produced incontrovertible evidence of the evolutionary descent of human beings from ape-like ancestors that philosophers and scientists were forced to take seriously the idea that human beings are much closer to other animals than had hitherto been believed. Darwin, of course, was not the first to speak of a kinship between humans and nonhuman animals. Pythagoras (ca. 570–ca. 490 BCE), Empedocles (ca. 495–ca. 435 BCE), Theophrastus (ca. 371–ca. 286 BCE), Porphyry (ca. 232–ca. 304), Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), David Hume (1711–1776), Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) had all maintained that humans have something significantly in common with animals. Indeed, many of them (e.g., Pythagoras and Bentham) even suggested that this was a reason to include animals in the moral community. But it was Darwin who put the idea of the human-as-animal on a firm scientific basis and showed the philosophical inadequacy of excluding animals from the moral community based on a dogmatic appeal to the metaphysics of antiquity, Scriptural authority, or Cartesianism. Of course, this did not stop philosophers retreating to the traditional view that humans are superior to other animals because only humans possess reason, despite Darwin’s insistence that the differences between the mental capacities of humans and those of apes are not as decisive as was once thought. (As Darwin stated in *The Descent of Man*, “Nevertheless the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind.”) Indeed, even the great nineteenth-century thinkers who welcomed aspects of Darwinian theory for the scientific backing that it gave their own viewpoints—Karl Marx (1818–1883),

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)—showed little or no interest in invoking our biological kinship with animals as a reason for including them in the moral community. Until fairly recently, the overwhelming scientific evidence that humans are animals would seem to have had little impact on the traditional tendency of philosophers to view themselves as belonging to a moral class all their own to the exclusion of other animals.

## Twentieth-Century Animal Ethics

### *Utilitarianism*

It is only since the publication of Peter Singer's book, *Animal Liberation*, in 1975,<sup>6</sup> that contemporary philosophers have begun to take seriously the idea of extending moral consideration to animals. Singer, a utilitarian, defends the thesis that we are obligated to extend moral consideration to animals that are capable of feeling pain. Drawing an analogy between "speciesism," understood as a bias in favor of the members of one's own species, and traditional racism and sexism, Singer claims that the refusal to consider the interests of those animals that can suffer is wrong for the same reasons that discrimination against blacks or women is wrong, namely, that it constitutes a violation of the fundamental moral *principle of equal consideration of interests*. That an animal has interests is shown by the fact that it is sentient, which Singer defines as the capacity to feel pain (or pleasure). Animals that are capable of feeling pain clearly have an interest in not being put in pain, and thus it morally behooves us to consider such an interest when deciding how to act. Anything less constitutes an act of discrimination that is no more defensible than discrimination against human beings on the basis of the possession of some morally irrelevant feature, such as skin color or gender. An appeal to the principle of equal consideration of interests, however, does not constitute an absolute guarantee that human interests will *never* override the interests of an animal, but it does rule out ignoring or overriding the interests of other animals for trivial reasons. Thus, while it may be possible to justify experimenting on an animal in the case where thousands of human lives might be saved, it is not possible to justify injuring an animal for shallow or trivial human interests, such as the enjoyment of meat or non-crucial animal research.

### *Deontology*

Eight years after Singer's landmark book appeared, Tom Regan published *The Case for Animal Rights*<sup>7</sup> (1983), a deontological defense of animal ethics. In it,

Regan calls for the complete abolition of the use of animals in science, commercial farming, commercial and sport hunting, and trapping. Regan argues that the majority of animals involved in such practices are like us: conscious beings whose welfare is not a matter of indifference to them. Thus, "they too must be viewed as experiencing subjects of a life, with inherent value of their own." To have inherent value, according to Regan, is to have a fundamental right *not* to be treated merely as a means to an end. Regan rejects the argument that animals have less inherent value than humans do because they lack the requisite reason, intelligence, or autonomy. If such an argument were valid then, by parity of reasoning, we should grant less inherent value to *human beings* who are deficient in these attributes, such as the severely mentally impaired, something few critics would be willing to concede. Indeed, it is our very reason that compels us to recognize that humans and animals that are subjects of a life have equal inherent value, and therefore equal rights. Insofar as animals have equal rights, then we as humans have correlative obligations to do them no harm, no matter how beneficial the expected results might be for *us*. This entails that animal experimentation be categorically abolished. "Lab animals are not our tasters; we are not their kings." A similar conclusion is drawn with respect to commercial animal agriculture.

### *Contractarianism*

The following decade witnessed an explosion in the field of animal ethics. It is impossible to mention all the pioneering work that was done, though especial mention should be made of Mark Rowlands's essay "Contractarianism and Animal Rights"<sup>8</sup> (1997), which attempts to counter the theory that has been most hostile to the idea of animal liberation, namely, the view that moral rights are the product of a social agreement or contract. The assumption behind this theory (called "contractarianism") is that because the parties to the contract are necessarily rational agents, then the direct *beneficiaries* of the moral contract are necessarily rational agents too. Rowlands makes a case for why we should view the capacity for rational agency as a "morally arbitrary property" in our attempt to establish just moral principles. Using the work of the well-known political and moral philosopher John Rawls, Rowlands argues that in order to arrive at fair and equal moral principles for regulating actions, we should reason as though we were behind a "veil of ignorance" by ignoring any socioeconomic, intellectual, or natural advantages that might bias us toward adopting unjust moral principles. Rowlands's thesis is that this contractarian approach to arriving at moral principles cannot be used to exclude the interests of nonhuman animals *in principle*. In fact, when properly understood, contractarianism *must*

include such interests if it is to be truly impartial when developing just moral principles. Rowlands's adoption of contractarianism to defend a robust conception of animal rights is noteworthy for the fact that it turns the tables on contractarianism, a theory that is extremely popular among philosophers and political theorists, and which is often assumed to include only rational human beings within its scope, to the exclusion of nonhuman animals. If Rowlands is correct, and contractarianism actually *entails* strong rights for animals, then much of the work done in moral philosophy—work which is chiefly human-centered and grounded on a rejection of strong animal rights—calls for radical revision.

### *Human and Animal Rights*

Paola Cavalieri, an Italian philosopher who has written extensively on animal ethics, is best known for her work with the Great Ape Project, an organization dedicated to securing basic rights (such as the right to life, individual liberty, and protection from torture) for all of the great apes (including humans). Her chief philosophical contribution to the animal ethics debate is found in her book *The Animal Question: Why Nonhuman Animals Deserve Human Rights*<sup>7</sup> (2002). Much like Singer, Regan, and Rowlands, Cavalieri is determined to find a compelling case for granting animals strong moral consideration. But in order to make such a case, she argues, we should make use of a normative theory that has intuitive and widespread appeal, not just among philosophers, but also among the public. Cavalieri believes the normative theory that fits these criteria is *the universal doctrine of human rights*. Cavalieri is aware of the obvious irony of using a theory of *human* rights to protect *nonhuman* animals. She believes, however, that a rigorous analysis of human rights doctrine shows that it cannot be limited to human beings by the force of its own logic. In order to make her case, Cavalieri examines what is required for one to be a rights-bearer. Following philosopher Alan Gewirth, Cavalieri shows that to be a rights-bearer one needs to have “the capacity to enjoy freedom and welfare, as well as life which is a precondition for them, both directly and as prerequisites for action.” This classical criterion is intentionally broad to cover all members of the human species, regardless of inequalities and differences between them. However, drawing the criterion for moral consideration this widely necessarily brings within its scope many nonhuman animals, which are also “intentional agents,” and have a stake in their own “freedom and welfare,” too. This leads Cavalieri to conclude that the very doctrine that establishes human rights also establishes *nonhuman* rights. The upshot of this argument, according to Cavalieri, is that we ought to understand ourselves as having direct duties to animals that are similar to the ones we have toward human beings under human rights doctrine. In brief,

animals are owed basic rights of noninterference and the right to be treated as legal *subjects* rather than as mere property.

*The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*

Since the early nineties, the traditional reliance on the normative ethical theories of utilitarianism, contractarianism, and natural rights doctrine in philosophical discussions of the treatment of animals has come under critical attack by feminists working within a theory known as “the ethics of care.” This moral theory, which emerged in the mid-eighties with the publication of Nel Noddings’s *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984),<sup>10</sup> called into question the “masculine” bias within the Western tradition in which morality is essentially conceived of as a method of arbitrating between my own interests and those of others. Feminists argued that such an approach overvalued importance of rationality at the expense of relationality (between persons), justice at the expense of caring for the needs of individuals, universal obligations at the expense of “feeling with” the other. In two edited volumes of essays, *Beyond Animal Rights* (1996)<sup>11</sup> and *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics* (2007),<sup>12</sup> feminists Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams organized a debate that sought to apply these insights beyond the provincial human-to-human relation and extend them to the issue of animal well-being. Arguing for ethical attentiveness and sympathy in our relationships with animals, while also proposing a link between the continuing domination of women by men and the human domination of nature, this approach by feminists does not argue for abandoning wholesale universal principles, the need to justify or condemn ratiocinatively the way we treat others, principles based on respect for life, sentience, or rights, but reminds us of the legitimate role of the natural human feeling of sympathy and compassion in morality. This feminist care tradition in animal ethics emphasizes the importance of *relations* above all else grounded in our essential connectedness with each other—people *and animals*—rather than seeing ourselves as isolated Donnian islands *in abstracto*.

Some Facts and Figures

What is the net result of the historical exclusion of nonhuman animals from the moral community? A brief look at the current meat-eating industry and animal experimentation, two paradigm examples, shows just how detrimental to the welfare of animals the refusal to attribute them moral status has become. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, nearly 10 billion

animals were killed for food in 2015 in the United States alone; the United Nations Food and Agriculture Association puts the worldwide number of animals slaughtered at 56 billion. As staggering as these numbers are, they do not provide a complete picture, inasmuch as the deaths of aquatic animals and animals that die prior to slaughter are not counted by either organization. Large numbers of animals are also used for experimentation purposes. The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service estimates that in 2004, three quarters of a million animals were used for research purposes, and that half of those animals were involved in painful, including distressful, experiments. This number is highly misleading, however, as the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service does not include rats, mice, and some other species, which are excluded under the Animal Welfare Act, even though these constitute the vast majority of animals used for experimentation purposes. When these other animals are included, the most conservative estimates put the number of animals used in experiments at about 100 million

The intensive raising and slaughtering of animals for food and the high numbers of animals used for experimentation purposes are, however, only the tip of the iceberg. Animals suffer routine abuse and death in other industries and practices. Animals are trapped, hunted, and used for any number of entertainment purposes (e.g., bullfighting, cockfighting, rodeos, zoos, and circuses), as well as being killed for their fur and other byproducts. It is hoped that this volume will help to make the Levinasian case for stopping, reforming, or curbing unethical practices such as these.

### Thematic Overview of Essays

In the first original essay in this collection, "Levinas and the Other Animals: Phenomenological Analysis of Obligation," Alphonso Lingis presents a critical discussion of Levinas's phenomenological account of the encounter with a human being who faces me. Although Lingis acknowledges the originality and importance of Levinas's work, he finds deficiencies and distortions in Levinas's account of the experience of being faced by another human being. For example, whereas Levinas's account of this encounter focuses on the vulnerability and neediness of the other, Lingis's own analysis suggests that this vulnerability is secondary to the "positive plenitude of a life," which calls for my attention and respect independently of any needs of the other that I may be called on to fulfill. For Lingis, to be faced by another and perceive this positive plenitude is to find myself called on "to respect its space, to let it flourish, to care about it and care for it." More generally, Lingis argues that the obligation that arises

from the face-to-face encounter differs from and can conflict with the rules and maxims that govern behavior in the economic, social, and political order, which, according to Levinas, would derive from this experience. Turning to the phenomenology of encounters with nonhuman animals, Lingis argues that there is also an experience of finding oneself under obligation in the empirical encounters with individuals of other species. We respond to their needs, but similarly to his analysis of the encounter with another person, Lingis insists that this need is perceived within the context of "the antecedent positivity of the fullness of an organism that is there." Like the obligations that issue in the face-to-face encounter with other human beings, this kind of obligation can conflict with the principles and maxims of ethical and legal theories of animal welfare and rights. In the concluding section of his essay, Lingis considers the phenomenology of interspecies community. Drawing on Bentham and Nussbaum, he argues that the general principles that determine obligation in ethical and legal systems refer back to the ways in which we experience obligation in empirical encounters with nonhuman animals. He looks at two very different types of experience, namely instinctual revulsion against cruelty, on the one hand, and a sense of wonder, on the other. Contra Levinas, he reiterates that ethical experience does not begin with the perception of the other's neediness and vulnerability. Rather, a phenomenology of interspecies community should take as its starting point the fact that we share this world with a vast array of "nonhuman companions—5,000 species of mammals, 10,500 species of birds, 17,000 species of reptiles and amphibians, 33,000 species of fish." The wonder that we feel in contemplating them is not an irrational feeling, but issues in a quest for knowledge about them, and in active respect for them.

Bob Plant's essay, "Vulnerable Lives: Levinas, Wittgenstein and 'Animals,'" tackles the anthropocentrism at the heart of Levinas's ethics. Plant argues that Levinas's hyperbolic emphasis on the radical alterity of the other is inconsistent with his view that only human beings qualify as others, and that his highly metaphorical and sometimes "overtly spiritualized" language detracts attention from his account of the "mundane corporeality of intersubjective life." He sees in Levinas's thought a valuable corrective to the abstractions of moral philosophers, insofar as Levinas reminds us that both self and other are embodied creatures, and that our finitude and vulnerability are not merely contingent facts, but constitute "the mundane conditions of possibility for ethical life." While acknowledging the anthropocentrism that underlies a number of Levinas's remarks about animals in general, Plant is encouraged by Levinas's confession in the "The Animal Interview" that he doesn't know whether or not specific types of animals can be said to have a face. Drawing on the later Wittgenstein, he explores the relational possibilities between humans and different forms of animal life, focusing on what

Wittgenstein refers to as “an attitude towards a soul.” Admittedly, Wittgenstein himself uses the phrase explicitly in the context of interhuman relations, but Plant argues that the responsiveness to the other—particularly to the other’s pain and suffering, which is a key component of having an attitude toward a soul—is also a feature of human relations with at least some types of animals. Although Wittgenstein’s work is anthropocentric, in that he asserts that we are more hesitant to attribute pain to the animals that least resemble humans, Plant argues that this is an anthropocentrism that is at least more hospitable than Levinas’s, insofar as Wittgenstein suggests that we may be able to talk of “pain” in a meaningful way, even with reference to a fly. However, Wittgenstein’s emphasis on pain, Plant argues, is potentially misleading; an investigation of the neurology of the common housefly might lead us to conclude that we would be mistaken in attributing pain to it. Plant therefore turns instead to the notion of vulnerability, and argues that we can have “an attitude towards a soul” of an animal, even if it doesn’t have the neurological capacity to experience pain because, like that animal, we humans “are creatures of flesh and blood who are born, require nurturing and protection, grow old, suffer illness and die.”

In his essay “Dog and Philosophy: Does Bobby Have What It Takes to Be Moral?” Peter Atterton focuses on the question as to whether animals are capable of Levinasian responsibility for the Other. The essay begins with a close reading of the short essay “Name of a Dog or Natural Right,” appearing in the second edition of *Difficult Freedom* (1976),<sup>13</sup> and which is best known for the story of Bobby, the stray dog who befriended Levinas and the other Jewish prisoners during their internment in a POW camp in Germany during World War II. Although Atterton’s interest in the essay is primarily philosophical, his reading of the text is also attentive to its literary qualities and structure. It also provides helpful background from the Jewish tradition regarding the first part of the essay, in which Levinas offers a commentary on the biblical injunction not to eat meat from an animal that has been killed by beasts in the field, but rather to “cast it to the dogs” (Exodus 22:31). According to rabbinic tradition, the dogs’ entitlement to this meat is a reward for their silence (Exodus 11:7) during the tenth and final plague (the death of all firstborn humans and animals) in the story of the Exodus, on the eve of the Israelites’ redemption from slavery in Egypt. For Levinas, this transition point is no less than “the supreme hour of humanity’s institution,” as the Israelites’ redemption institutes their freedom to “follow the most high Voice”; they will celebrate their freedom by remembering their servitude “in solidarity with all those who are subjugated”; and the silence of the dogs at this ethically charged moment “will attest to the dignity of the person.” Levinas sees in this evidence of “a transcendence in the animal.” Atterton points out that there is no literal possibility that dogs

would not bark during such an upheaval, and that Levinas himself seems to acknowledge this. In the second part of the essay, Levinas turns from biblical exegesis and recounts the now well-known story of Bobby, the wandering dog who welcomed Levinas and the other prisoners. Levinas, Atterton says, clearly sees this autobiographical story as isomorphic with the biblical tale of silent dogs. As mentioned above, Atterton sees the essay as evincing two apparently contradictory ideas in Levinas's thought: the view of animals as morally inferior beings compared with humans, and the view of (at least some) animals as moral subjects. Much of the argument hinges on the interpretation of Levinas's description of Bobby as the "last Kantian in Nazi Germany, not having the brain needed to universalize the maxims of its drives." Whereas Derrida and others critique Levinas for complimenting Bobby and then immediately undermining his praise of the dog's putative moral behavior, Atterton argues that this is based on a flawed understanding of Levinas's intention in invoking Kantian ethics. The compliment "last Kantian" refers to the second formulation of the categorical imperative, which calls for respecting the other, rather than the first formulation, which calls for the adoption of universalizable maxims. Atterton elaborates on this by distinguishing between respect as *observentia*, which is acting on the basis of an impersonal reason (something that Bobby would appear to be incapable of), and respect as *reverentia*, which is a feeling aroused by the Other. He argues that it is the capacity that the Other has to awaken respect in the latter sense that unites Levinas's ethics with Kant's, and enables us to recognize the morally significant behavior of animals.

Michael L. Morgan's contribution, "Animals, Levinas, and Moral Imagination," opens with an analysis of Levinas's ethics that distinguishes between the "ground" of our moral world in the face-to-face or ethical relation, and "our moral world" itself, which he defines as "the complexity of decisions, actions, norms, and other considerations that make up our everyday lives in the light of this dimension." In exploring the extent of this moral world, Morgan draws on the thought of Martin Buber as a comparison case. Buber, like Levinas, offered a dialogical, first-person account of human existence, and presented interpersonal relations as paradigmatic of ethical and moral normativity. Yet Buber, as is well known, explicitly referred to a much wider range of potential types of Other who could be encountered as my "thou," including natural objects like trees and animals, as well as cultural objects and works of art. Morgan suggests that Levinas may have been similarly open to including such beings in our moral world, but the challenge he, and we, face is the intellectual or philosophical task of accounting for our sense of responsibility in these relations. Morgan cites the work of Alice Crary to develop his argument that no morally neutral, scientific information can determine for us whether or not we should regard

animals as having “faces” in the Levinasian sense. On his reading of Levinas’s later work in particular, we can discern the idea that “there is nothing and no one that could not in principle make a claim upon any one of us, at any time and in any circumstances.” In a move that has some similarities with Bob Plant’s discussion of vulnerability and our “attitude toward a soul” of a nonhuman animal, Morgan argues that “if we can imagine being drawn by the pain and suffering of a creature before us,” then we can understand Levinas’s philosophy as teaching that we “encounter that creature face-to-face.” Morgan acknowledges the anthropocentrism that is evident in a number of Levinas’s texts, but also develops a reading of “The Name of a Dog” to present an understanding of Levinasian ethics that is not limited to interhuman relations.

In his essay “Small Justice: The Rights of the Other Animal,” Jonathan Crowe explores two common objections to using the language of duties and rights to talk about human responsibility for animals. The first objection is the claim that animals should not be considered bearers of rights, because they are not capable of showing moral concern for others, and are therefore not members of the moral community. The second, related objection is based on what is assumed to be a strict demarcation between the realm of ethics and that of justice. Crowe argues that these objections to talking about the rights of animals and the duties of humans toward them rest on the mistake of thinking that “ethical and institutional questions can and should be separated.” After considering two radically different views of the potential for a human “economy of kindness”—contrasting Nietzsche’s pessimistic views on the limits of human compassion with the utopianism of Jesus—he turns to Levinasian ethics, focusing on the often neglected “temporally extended character of the ethical moment.” Crowe emphasizes that for Levinas each face-to-face encounter “includes traces of prior ethical experiences,” such that “the alterity of each face increases and deepens ever more profoundly” (*TI*, 283). The individual subject’s passive synthesis of these repeated ethical encounters, argues Crowe, produces an attitude toward social life that “contains the beginnings of an ethical attitude that can, in turn, prepare the ground for legal and political discourse.” In other words, Levinas’s philosophy undermines the stark demarcation between the realms of ethics and justice, and therefore calls into question the grounds for one of the objections to using the language of rights and duties vis-à-vis animal ethics. However, rather simply undermining this objection, Crowe extends his analysis even further. A key feature of Levinasian ethics is its asymmetry and rejection of the reciprocity of obligations, whereas Crowe argues that moral discourse introduces a form of symmetry altogether unknown in the ethical encounter. In moral discourse, or the realm of justice, I am the potential holder of both duties and rights, thus leading to the risk of ethical avoidance on my part.

But this same risk does not exist in animal rights because, as Crowe suggests, animals cannot engage in ethical avoidance. In a conclusion that the casual reader of the "The Animal Interview" might find surprising, Crowe proposes that "the rights of the other animal might therefore properly be regarded as a model for human rights." For it is in the realm of animal ethics that we can see "the economy of the pure ethical gift, without exchange or consideration."

In his essay "*Ecce Animalot: Levinas, Derrida, and the Other Animal*," Matthew Calarco provides an important critical overview of Derrida's engagement with Levinas and animals, particularly in his posthumous book *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (1997). Calarco argues that key elements of Derrida's criticism of Levinas in that work were already present, if not fully developed, in Derrida's highly influential 1964 essay "Violence and Metaphysics," in which Derrida suggested that Levinas ran the risk of reproducing a kind of classical humanism and anthropocentrism. Similar points were also raised by Derrida in the 1987 interview "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject." Although Derrida recognized in Levinas's ethics an original and important resource for challenging traditional notions of subjectivity, he also argued that, in Calarco's words, "Levinas's anthropocentric tendencies carry a sort of intellectual baggage that keeps his ethics firmly lodged within the metaphysical tradition that gave rise to the classical notion of human subjectivity." Derrida credits Levinas's notion of subjectivity as partially posthumanist because it calls into question the idea that ethics has its ultimate origin in the autonomous self. On Levinas's account, ethics originates in the call of the Other. However, according to Derrida, by limiting the ethical call to human sources, Levinas effectively allows the epistemology of presence to reassert itself, and, like many other philosophers in the Western tradition, opens up a zone that allows for the killing, with impunity, of nonhuman others. Calarco's analysis of Derrida's approach distinguishes between Levinas's humanism ("his efforts to determine in advance that radical alterity will arrive only from the human") and his anthropocentrism (his unwillingness to include animals in the realm of ethics), but argues that the former is a "logically necessary, concomitant implication" of the latter. Calarco then suggests that Derrida's entire discussion of the question of animals amounts to an attempt to lead scholars in this field "beyond the critique of humanism towards a critique of anthropocentrism." Calarco proceeds to offer a detailed and critical analysis of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, beginning with a consideration of whether Derrida revised in any way his judgement of Levinas's humanism and anthropocentrism subsequent to the original publication of the "Animal Interview." He notes that Derrida did not seem to have access to "The Paradox of Morality," but instead was reading it at a remove through excerpts quoted by John Llewelyn in *The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience*, and that Derrida sometimes confused

Llewelyn's questions with questions in the published interview. Derrida picked up on the ambivalence expressed in the interview, observing, in Calarco's phrase, "that Levinas grants a certain face to the animal with one hand while taking the face away with the other"; however, according to Derrida, it is the second move that dominates in Levinas's thought. Nevertheless, both Derrida and Calarco find Levinas's remarks about not knowing whether or not the snake has a face, and not knowing "at what moment one has a face," a promising starting point for undermining the humanist and anthropocentric thrust of Levinas's own work. Calarco concludes the essay with reflections and suggestions for how to think "with and beyond" Levinas in view of doing justice to animals beyond the limitations of humanism and anthropocentrism.

Sophia Efstathiou's essay "Facing Animal Research: Levinas and Technologies of Effacement" builds on Emmanuel Levinas's concept of the face to analyze encounters between humans and animals in research. Efstathiou identifies key normative challenges in animal research as indicating a tension between facing and effacing animals and humans. Efstathiou follows Levinas in understanding a face as a sensible surface that can communicate an inner depth: the being of the Other. This extends an ordinary idea of the face as a "head-face" to include other types of embodied expression that can "hit" one, like the front of a storm, and that speak of the inner being of an Other. These may include, for instance, smells, touching, voices, and bodily noises or movements. Efstathiou considers Levinas's account of his experience as a prisoner of war in Nazi Germany to argue that the face, as a capacity, is not sufficient for facing. So, what conditions encountering the Other through his or her face? The central claim in the essay is that doing animal research involves a process of effacement happening to both animals and humans. Effacement can facilitate some types of objectification (happening to animals) and distancing (happening to researchers), but it is, Efstathiou argues, a more basic process. Effacing an Other happens by conditioning encounters with his or her face. Efstathiou identifies five types of technologies of effacement that operate to structure such encounters: (1) built architectures; (2) entering and exiting procedures; (3) protective garments and equipment; (4) identification and labeling techniques; and (5) experimental protocols. Such technologies can block animal and human face (while often adding a new one): they help transform looks, auditory, tactile, smell or other sense-scapes that structure encounters in the lab, and they help participants perform their expected professional roles. However, effacement is never complete. Animal research vacillates between conceiving animals as "faceless," laboratory equipment, made, bought, quality checked, and discarded once used, and conceiving them as beings researchers must "face," and whose behaviors, pains, and bodies the researchers can and should relate to their own. What

Efstathiou calls “humanimal” research ethics stresses the difficulty of divorcing animal and human suffering in the lab, and the importance of considering how these relationships can be mutually transformative and ethically relevant. It is standard for ethical assessments to take the form of harm-benefit analyses, which recognize costs as borne by animals (only) and benefits by people, despite the loss of face that both may suffer in the lab.

Katharine Loevy, in an essay titled “*Homo Homini Lupus*: Levinas and the Animal Within,” explores the implications of Levinas’s identification of the human as both animal and not-animal. On the one hand, in the “Animal Interview,” Levinas insists that humanity, identified here with ethicality, is “a new phenomenon” in relation to the animal. Yet Loevy points out that Levinas also uses the figure of the animal “to identify a part of the human that must be suspended or overcome in order for the humanity of the human to be manifest,” and that this double-positioning of the figure of the animal has been relatively common in the history of philosophy. Drawing on Derrida, she notes a “pernicious ambiguity” in Aristotle’s famous characterization of the human being as a “political animal.” At the same time as asserting human superiority over nonhuman animals, Aristotle portrays the human project as that of overcoming our own animality. Another common definition of “human being” in Western philosophy is that of the “rational animal”; Loevy traces a similar ambivalence in this conception, and argues that it too has largely derisive implications for nonhuman animals. Levinas’s work evinces a similar pattern: the evils of human history threaten to show that humans are no better than animals, and the ethical interruption of egoism is portrayed in such a way that violence is associated with animality. In interviews from the 1980s, including the “Animal Interview,” Levinas reformulates the traditional definition of the human being and suggests that “man is an unreasonable animal” (*AI*, 5); the ethical moment, in which the life of the other appears more important than my own life, is “unreasonable.” Levinas subverts the traditional association of humanity with rationality, positioning rationality as part of the self-interested, animal aspect of human nature that is in tension with human ethicality. Unlike Machiavelli, who argued that human beings should strive to integrate the human and animal aspects of their nature, Levinas portrays human beings as the site of a “perpetual struggle between animality and humanness.” Loevy explores the ways in which Levinas’s rendering of the human/animal binary is related to a series of other binary oppositions in his thought: totality/infinity, same/other, said/saying, and Greek/Hebrew. Drawing on both the “The Animal Interview” and “The Name of a Dog,” she argues that “the animal is the site of a complex and contradictory mix of identification and rejection on Levinas’s terms.” Although Levinas’s account of ethics is oriented to the alterity of the concrete other, his anthropocentrism and his deployment

of the human/animal binary limit the potential of his thought to accommodate responsibility for nonhuman animals. Nevertheless, Loevy concludes by proposing that Levinas's corpus contains resources for interrupting this discourse about the human/animal binary and provoking a rethinking of its terms. Such a rethinking might amount to "the mobilization of Levinas's best insights against one of his more prominent shortcomings."

Brian Shūdō Schroeder's contribution, "What Is the Trace of the Original Face? Levinas, Buddhism, and the Mystery of Animality," draws on Zen Buddhism's approach to mystery in its search for an animal ethics that avoids the anthropocentrism of Levinas's thought. The essay begins with a discussion of the relation between the face of the animal and Buddha-nature. According to Schroeder, Buddha-nature is not something that can be cognitively known; rather it must be "transmitted between two beings fully present and aware of each other in the moment of transmission." One of the features of Zen that distinguishes it from other forms of Buddhism is the idea that "awakening is a simultaneously occurring activity between the one who attains realization and the one who acknowledges it." Although this is more usually seen in the context of the relationship between the disciple and the master, Schroeder contends that it can also occur in the relationship between humans and animals. Turning to the literature on Levinas and animal ethics, Schroeder argues that scholars who aim to construct a Levinasian account of responsibility for nonhuman animals tend to do so by attempting to "paganize his distinctively Jewish-based philosophy." Secular interpreters of Levinas often consider the face without reference to the trace, though in so doing, Schroeder argues, "the ethical is stripped of its very force." The challenge that is posed to these commentators is to explain why the notion of the trace "can or should be ignored or transformed." More importantly still, Schroeder asks what would supply "the content to the formalism of the ethical relation between the self and the Other." The trace refers back to the themes of radical alterity and asymmetry in the ethical relation, and Schroeder wonders whether it is possible to "retain a sense of ethical transcendence that is not predicated on a radical asymmetry." He draws on the work of David Wood, a thinker whose work centers on immanence, and that of Jean-Luc Nancy, to explore an ethics that includes both symmetry and asymmetry, and relates these ideas to the Buddhist notion of dependent origination. In the concluding section of the essay, Schroeder considers Levinas's rejection of mystery and paganism, and proposes that mystery may actually be constitutive for an ethical relationship to the environment and, in particular, to nonhuman animals. As he puts it: "The view that all sentient and non-sentient beings are Buddha-nature calls the individual self and its freedom into question in just as powerful a way as does the Levinasian Other."

Tamra Wright's essay, "Now We're Talking Pedagogy': Levinas, Animal Ethics, and Jewish Education," brings both Levinas's confessional writings and the wider context of animal ethics in the Jewish tradition into dialogue with his responses to questions about ethical responsibility for nonhuman animals in the "Animal Interview." Wright opens with a discussion of an important passage from *Nine Talmudic Readings* that has so far received little consideration from commentators who write about Levinas and animals. In "And God Created Woman," Levinas's commentary on Berachot 61a (which is itself a commentary on the creation narrative in Genesis), he presents a way of understanding the distinction between humans and other animals, going beyond the assertion in the "The Animal Interview" that humanity is marked by the ability to prioritize the life of the Other above one's own. Using language that is very similar to that of *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas draws on the rabbinic texts to suggest that humanity is defined not by freedom and consciousness, but by a responsibility that is prior to the subject's freedom or initiative; to be human is to be "a hostage to the universe." Wright endeavors to show how this conception of subjectivity can inform an approach to animal ethics that is grounded in both Jewish tradition and the spirit of Levinas's philosophy. She argues, on the one hand, that the anthropocentrism and other key factors of Levinas's thought are consistent with the Jewish tradition, and, on the other hand, that there are ample resources within Judaism to shape an increasingly compassionate animal ethics, inspired by Levinas's ethics, but not encumbered with its shortcomings.

*Face to Face with Animals* is the first book-length discussion of Levinas and animals to appear in print, though hopefully not the last. Even if there is still much more that is original to say on this subject, we hope at least that the essays compiled here have the distinction of being the happy circumstance in which the animal question has finally entered into "orthodox" Levinasian criticism. The question not only suggests a rich set of new ethical concerns for Levinasians to address but also calls for an appropriate ethical response on behalf of the Other who is *other than human*.

## Notes

1. See: John Llewelyn, "Am I Obsessed by Bobby? (Humanism of the Other Animal)," *The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience: A Chiasmic Reading of Responsibility in the Neighborhood of Levinas, Heidegger and Others* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 49–67; David Clark, "On Being 'The Last Kantian in Nazi Germany': Dwelling with Animals after Levinas," in *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History*, eds. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (New York: Routledge, 1997), 165–98; Jacques