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Review of: Animal Pragmatism: Rethinking Human-nonhuman Relationship edited by Erin McKenna and Andrew Light

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Review Section


Nearly every night of the week, viewers of the TV network, Animal Planet, can follow the exploits of big city, anti-cruelty police officers in New York, Houston, San Francisco, or Miami. The life of a TV animal cop is a non-stop emotional rollercoaster as officers raid cockfights, return lost dogs to their owners, and bring animal abusers to justice. Here is how the Animal Planet web page describes one of the shows:

Viewers see a wide range of animal issues in Animal Cops: San Francisco, from the touching reunion between a family and their cat that has been missing for seven years, to the disturbing stories of dogs that are mistreated in the rampant problem of dog-fighting rings in the city, to emotional rescue missions like a kitten caught in a chimney.

In reality, the life of an animal cruelty officer is quite different as documented in Brute Force: Animal Police and the Challenge of Cruelty. Arnold Arluke’s book raises troubling issues of how individuals cope with cruelty in the face of moral ambiguity.

For six months, Arluke studied the law enforcement division of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA). He rode with each of the officers as they responded to complaints, and he interviewed the cops, dispatchers, and administrators of the organization. This is rigorous ethnography; in addition to amassing 700 pages of field notes and transcriptions of interviews with the officers, dispatchers, and administrators of the organization, Arluke corroborated his MSPCA observations by spending another month and a half with the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals’ enforcement department in New York City.

The ambiguity that animal police face takes many forms. Take, for example, their professional status. While humane officers undergo law enforcement training, carry guns, make arrests, and testify in court, they are not regarded as “real police” by either the public or other cops. Like school resource officers who are often derided as “kiddie cops” by their colleagues, animal police are near the bottom of the law enforcement hierarchy. The job of humane officers is also misunderstood by members of the public.
On the one hand, they are often confused with animal control personnel ("dog catchers") as evidenced by frequent calls they get related to strays and to barking dogs. On the other hand, they are often erroneously stereotyped as animal rights extremists.

A second form of ambiguity that animal police confront is situational. cruelty complaints typically begin with a telephone call to the enforcement division, which is answered by a dispatcher. The dispatcher must decide whether a complaint falls within the jurisdiction of animal law enforcement and whether it is a legitimate case of mistreatment or, say, the over-reaction of a nosy neighbor. As these decisions are usually based on very limited information, dispatchers sometimes will “stretch” the apparent severity of a complaint, a practice that results in what officers refer to as “bullshit calls.” Like regular police, animal cops never know what they will face when answering a call. Are, for example, a dog’s ribs showing due to the effects of malnutrition or simply because the dog is congenitally skinny? Are a puppy’s persistent howls a symptom of acute pain, which would fall within the scope of anti-cruelty statutes, or boredom—which does not? Is an animal’s situation so dire that the officers should themselves violate the law by trespassing to assess the animal’s condition?

A third form of ambiguity reflects the problematic legal status of animals in American culture. While “perps” are regularly brought to justice on the Animal Planet, this is rarely the case in real life. Arluke reports that while rookie cops are anxious to take abusers to court, their more experienced peers take pains to avoid court appearances. District attorneys do not like to bring animal abuse cases to trial, judges typically mete out light sentences, and animal control officers are sometimes ridiculed in the courtroom. Thus, like regular cops, animal police quickly develop cynical attitudes toward the legal system.

A fourth form of ambiguity concerns professional self-concept. Arluke’s respondents could roughly be divided between animal-oriented officers who are drawn to the profession because of their involvement in animal welfare and police-oriented officers whose professional identities are more closely tied to their interest in law enforcement. As officers become more experienced, their professional image tended to change as a result of their frustration with the limitations of the legal system to deal with animal cruelty. Over time, most of the animal cops Arluke studied came to see themselves as educators or coaches rather than as police officers per se. They found it more effective to teach owners, for example, that companion animals kept outdoors should have continuous access to water and that, in the harsh winters of New England, straw is the best insulation for dog houses. Even with this shift in professional orientation, however, many officers become jaded when owners do not make the long-term changes in their behavior necessary for their pets’ well being.
Arluke is as skillful a writer as he is an observer, and readers will find his portraits of the MSPCA animal cruelty police fascinating. But *Brute Force* may not be for the faint of heart. While most calls that the cops respond to are mundane—complaints about insufficient shelter of animals kept outdoors—others are quite disturbing. Some of the more grizzly cases are graphically depicted in photographs that accompany the text.

*Brute Force* is the most recent in a series of ethnographic studies on social and psychological aspects of human-nonhuman animal relationships that Arluke has conducted over the last 20 years. This body of research has included studies of laboratory animal care technicians, animal shelter workers, animal hoarders, humane society executives, and “normal” animal abusers. The theme through all of Arluke’s work is how individuals deal with moral complexity in the context of interactions with members of other species.

The studies of ethics fall into two categories. Prescriptive ethics is a branch of philosophy; it is concerned with the development of coherent moral principles that can provide guidance about what we should do in morally problematic situations. In contrast, descriptive ethics is a type of behavioral science—the study of what people actually think and do when confronting moral issues. *Brute Force* is a superb example of the latter approach to the study of ethics. Indeed, the book is an excellent example of how human-nonhuman animal studies can shed light on important aspects of human nature that transcend anthrozoology.

It is instructive to contrast Arluke’s anthropological approach to the study of real-world ethics with the rarified prescriptive thinking that characterizes much contemporary animal rights philosophy. The officer who is faced with confiscating a malnourished, yet loved, cat from the cat’s home—knowing that the likely result will be euthanasia—will find little in the way of practical guidance in the writings of absolutists such as Tom Regan or Joan Dunayer. Arluke aptly characterizes the ethical paradigm that enables animal cops to perform their duties day by day as “humane realism.” *Brute Force* will be of particular value to scholars, including moral philosophers, wishing to inject a healthy dose of humane realism into their studies of human-nonhuman animal relationships.

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Because animation—the “omnipresent pictorial form of the modern era”—probably provides the largest quantity of nonhuman animal representation in contemporary visual culture, it is worth looking briefly at some of the things it tells us about human-animal relations. This is important because, among other things, mainstream animation (Disney, Dreamworks) is particularly revealing about the links and fault-lines between the consumption of images and the consumption of animals.

As advertisements and trailers are always reminding us, film going is an “experience.” The word implies that spectatorship involves, in some sense, “living” a movie as much as watching it, although the different levels of film experience are really an expansion of types of consumption. The recent history of animation has taken to new levels the pioneering integrated marketing of films and toys, especially the non-human animal characters, begun by Walt Disney in the late 1920s and Warner Brothers in the 1930s (Simensky, 1998).

Furthermore, animation has a new-found respectability as shown by its status at the major film festivals: *Shrek 2* (2004) was screened at Cannes and *Howl’s Moving Castle* (2004) challenged for the Golden Lion in Venice and are now distributed on an equal par with action movies. No longer are they seen as the province of young children and thus a more restricted commercial product (Frater, 2004). DVDs, toys, computer games, and commercial tie-ins are absolutely key to the production of animation films so that the film experience is extended into the home and daily life. The financial stakes are extremely high: $50 million was spent on the marketing of *Madagascar* in the United States alone. This is epitomized in the section of the film’s web-site entitled “Fun and Learning,” which roots the playful celebration of animals in, among other things, advertising for interactive games, documentary film clips of the wildlife and people of Madagascar, and the list of commercial production partners for tie-ins (General Mills, Payless Shoesource, Ralphs, Denny’s, and Krispy Kreme Doughnuts).

The combination of commercialism, including businesses that sell animal-based products, and pro-animal themes in *Madagascar* echo Disney’s licensing tie-in with Burger King during the promotion of *The Lion King* (1994), a film that offered a portrait of the hierarchical interconnectedness of the animal kingdom. This led to the tripling of the sales of Kids Meals at Burger King in New York City when plastic figures from the film were given away free (Ingram, 2000, p. 24). Despite this, the issue of consumption within many of these kinds of animated films with animal plots is deeply
problematic. There is a thread running through many mainstream cartoon films that predation and, by implication, meat-eating are not good things. The sharks at Fish-Eaters Anonymous in Pixar’s Finding Nemo (2003) with their mantra, “fish are friends not food,” are a case in point. In Disney’s Brother Bear (2003), the mutual antipathy between humans and bears, where they are both predators and prey to each other, is represented by a fight over fish.

Furthermore, the depiction of bears eating fish out of the river is clearly acceptable in a way that other forms of depicting animal consumption are not. In Dinosaur (2000), the carnivorous predators and those who articulate a survival of the fittest mentality at the expense of the weak and the elderly are a threat to social order to the extent that a civil, peaceable existence is only possible once they are defeated. Madagascar’s story of zoo animals trying to cope with finding themselves in the wild continues this theme. It is the nature of consumption that determines the structure of co-existence. Alex’s “inner lion” that starts to emerge on the island of Madagascar as he is starved of his usual zoo diet of fine steaks, and struggles with the civilized zoo lion who cohabits on such friendly terms in the zoo with what would normally be his prey animals. On the paradisal island of Madagascar, ironically, your best friend becomes your food. This is eventually resolved by introducing Alex to the joys of sushi and fish eating. If you have to eat meat, then try at least to stick to fish.

At one level, we can see this as part of an all too familiar suppression that conceals the links between killing and eating: a false picture that makes possible the co-existence of celebratory and destructive attitudes toward animals about which so much has been written. Indeed, Eisenstein described the cartoons of Disney as a counter to a modern way of life, which was like being in a slaughterhouse. People in the modern world, he wrote, “are forever at the mercy of a pitiless procession of laws, not of their own making, laws that divide up the soul, feelings, thoughts, just as the carcasses of pigs are dismembered by the conveyor belts of Chicago slaughterhouses” (Leyda, 1988 p. 3).

However, the relationship of animation to modernity is complicated in that it counterpoints an industrial system that it also parallels. In other words, it is a stratified, labor-intensive, industrialized process that mimics the construction of animals found in the technologically intensive fields of science and modern agriculture. Yet clearly there is something in animation that, if explored more extensively and given a more public discourse, could be used to undermine much of a marketing apparatus (or “experience”) that is in fact highly detrimental to animals. However, this slant turns on how one treats the ambivalences at the heart of animation.
Implicit in the word *animation* is the notion of giving “life” to something; the exact antithesis to human-animal relations, which are largely premised on taking life away. But the way in which life is given to figures in animation turns on the dividing line between exuberant, willful activity and total control. It raises the “question of whether ‘animation’ designates high-spiritedness, or a puppet-like state analogous to the assembly-line mechanization of the human body” (Ngai, 2005, p. 21)—and, one might add, the animal body. The puppet-like/mechanized pole of this opposition relates not just to the subject matter of cartoons, in which figures can be made to do anything no matter how preposterous, but also to the way they are put together by teams of animators with separately defined spheres of labor. Issues of life, control, and industrialization are central to both animation and human-animal relations, but they also share the same ambivalences. These center on the unstable distinctions between, say, living body and machine or the alien nature of animal “subjectivity,” which, in itself, is a hybrid construct of varying degrees and combinations of anthropomorphic, physical, or mechanical ideas. And if it is understood that the big difference here is that animation makes us laugh—animation as some kind of demented burlesque of a technologically underpinned modernity—it has to be remembered that these kinds of hybridity go to the heart of at least one modern theory of comedy: Bergson’s idea of laughter as a product of the perceived disjunction between the body as organic and as mechanical automaton.

Of course, the animals of *Madagascar* are not animals as such, nor are they even, if truth be told, representations of animals. This is not just because of their exaggerated shapes or (hippopotamus) Gloria’s bipedalism, (giraffe) Melman’s prescription pills and hypochondria, or (lion) Alex’s egomania. They are thoroughly anthropomorphized; they follow the basketball scores; and, when the monkeys escape from the zoo, they set off to see the writer Tom Wolfe to throw poo at him. Though the film has some neat jibes at anthropomorphism—the monkey who can read letters and do sign language—during the moments when the animals are seen through human ears and eyes, they are roaring, frightening creatures. So, they are both/and figures, and their relationship to nature—“Nature, it’s all over me, get it off”—is similarly divided.

The zoo animals are horrified at what they see of the predator-prey relations on the island of Madagascar. Furthermore, (zebra) Marty’s dream of leaving the zoo for the wild has plenty of objections from his zoo friends. The wild is not a good place to go because “its unhygienic,” and one option, escaping to Connecticut, is ruled out by Lyme’s Disease.

Even though the animals themselves in *Madagascar*, and most animation generally, are about as far from real animals as one can get in animal representation, they offer
more to an analysis of animal imagery than being simply written off as part of escapist entertainment. I am simplifying somewhat; but, as is well known, the logic that makes the killing of animals acceptable requires a powerful sense of species difference. Animation, on the other hand, creates a world in which, even though consumption is not ruled out (even cartoon characters have to eat) in a world of hybrid subjects or fluid objects, a lack of a sense of difference makes things like killing and eating animals highly problematic. This is rooted in the very nature of animation, as Eisenstein understood. The world of rigid order is also the world of slaughter: One entails the other. Yet at the same time, mainstream animation is an industrialized art form; in its marketing (the tie-ins with Burger King, McDonalds), it inevitably colludes in what it implicitly satirizes. However, this ambivalence allows for a wedge to be driven into the disjunction between encouraging children or families to be consumers of animal products, as the advertising tie-ins suggest, and treating them to the kinds of ideas that encourage a more balanced living between human and animal, or between animal and animal. If consumption is so problematic in the themes of animation, then clearly it is time to take animation as seriously again as it was in the 1920s and 1930s. Just as seriously, in fact, as the major film companies and global businesses are taking it now.

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Notes

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2 Wells (2002), p. 1. “Animation is arguably the most important creative form of the twenty-first century. Animation as an art, an approach, an aesthetic and an application informs many aspects of visual culture, from feature length films to prime-time sit-coms; from television and web cartoons to display functions on a range of new communications technologies. In short, animation is everywhere.” I am considering a very particular form of animation in this review. For a much broader description of the potential of animation see Wells (1998).

3 “Disney... arguably played a vanguard role in destabilizing the very notion of childhood as a sphere of innocence by targeting and differentiating the child as active consumer.” Schaffer (2004), p. 76. This trend has accelerated since the foundation of Dreamworks in 1994 and the release of Pixar’s Toy Story in 1995.


5 Certainly in the 1920s and 1930s cartoons were taken seriously by political ideologues, artists, and cultural commentators such as Benjamin, Adorno, Kracauer and Eisenstein. For instance, in 1933 the Nazis banned, presumably as part of their
stand on vivisection, a Walt Disney cartoon entitled *The Mad Doctor*, in which Pluto is strapped to an operating table and a mad scientist tries to cross him with a hen, Leslie, (2002), p. 114.

6 “The postures, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable to the exact extent that this body makes us think of a simple mechanical device” Bergson, (1947), pp. 22, 23, my translation. The comic process is the “mechanical bolted (plaqué) onto the living” (p. 29).

References


Amitav Ghosh’s new novel has much to teach its readers. *The Hungry Tide* details the natural, cultural, and political history of the Sundarbans, an archipelago in the Bay of Bengal, straddling the border between India and Bangladesh. The novel also manages to outline at least eight love stories, one of which is between a woman and an endangered species, the Gangetic dolphin. The balance Ghosh strikes between the
elements of the narrative is occasionally precarious—the love stories threaten to over-
heat, and the imperative to cover a broad range of issues occasionally forces charac-
ters to deliver lectures about local politics and ecosystems.

Ultimately, however, the novel is redeemed by its deep connection to the natural
world. What happens to its human characters exists in the context of life in the
Sundarbans, a uniquely fragile environment where “the boundaries between land and
water are always mutating, always unpredictable” and where there are “no borders . . .
to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea” (p. 6). Ghosh’s characters have their
own aspirations and personal histories, but their behavior is always presented as an
adaptive response to the peculiar environment in which they find themselves. The
land prescribes a mode of living that’s flexible, attuned to the rhythm of the tides,
and ready to pay the price the land and water exact. It is a way of living exemplified
by the Gangetic dolphin, *Orcaella brevirostris*, and the Bengal tiger.

Ghosh has certainly done his homework about the non-human characters, the *Orcaella*
in particular. One of the novel’s primary human players, Piya Roy, is a cetologist
studying the river dolphin. Through the cetologist’s observations, Ghosh is able to
incorporate a wealth of detail about the dolphins’ habitat and behavior. Fokir, a local
fisherman, aids Piya in her work. Though he speaks no English, Fokir is quick to
grasp the import of Piya’s study and is able to dovetail his work with hers, setting
his fishing lines as she maps the river’s contours:

> It was surprising enough that their jobs had not proved to be utterly incom-
> patible. . . . But that it had proved possible for two such different people to
> pursue their own ends simultaneously—people who could not exchange a
> word with each other and had no idea of what was going on in one another’s
> heads—was far more than surprising; it seemed almost miraculous. (p. 118)

With the dolphins as their bond, Piya and Fokir construct a working relationship that
blossoms into a deep personal connection. Just as important, their common pursuit
serves as a model for future research projects that will be rooted in, and respectful
of, local knowledge and local customs.

Lest this vision of intercultural and interspecies interaction seem too pat, Ghosh com-
plifies matters with the depiction of the Bengal tiger. Like the Gangetic dolphin, the
tiger is an endangered species; however, preserving the species in the natural habi-
tat raises difficult issues. The bulk of the Sundarbans’ human inhabitants are low-
caste immigrants from India and Bangladesh, drawn to the islands by the promise of
available land and a more egalitarian way of living. These dreams, however, come
with a heavy cost. As one character notes, “a human being is killed by a tiger every
other day in the Sundarbans” (p. 199). Another character observes,

If there were killings on that scale anywhere else on earth it would be called
a genocide, and yet here it goes almost unremarked: these killings are never
reported, never written about in the papers. And the reason is just that these
people are too poor to matter. (p. 248)

Ghosh shows his compassion for the displaced poor by including the true story of a
group of refugees who in 1979 attempted to settle an island the Indian government
had earmarked for conservation. The government’s brutal response makes it clear
that the protection of tiger habitat comes at the expense of people whose struggles
cannot help but arouse our sympathies.

How, then, are readers to regard conservation and habitat preservation? Are some
species more deserving of protection than others? The novel states its most satisfy-
ning answer to these troubling questions in the language of religion and myth rather
than in the language of politics or science. Ghosh references the story of Bon Bibi,
goddess of the forest, at several different points in the novel. Bon Bibi and her brother,
Shah Jongoli, adjudicate the relationship between humans and the natural world. Bon
Bibi comes to the Sundarbans to confront the demon king Dokkin Rai, “who held
sway . . . over every animal as well as every ghoul, ghost, and malevolent spirit”
(p. 86). The goddess defeats—but does not destroy—the demon king; instead, she
claims half the islands for human habitation and allows Dokkin Rai dominion over
what remains. In their dealings with humans, the goddess and the demon are repre-
sented by nonhuman animal avatars: The benevolent Bon Bibi is linked to the Gangetic
dolphin, while Dokkin Rai, compelled by “hatred coupled with insatiable desire . . .
for the pleasures afforded by human flesh,” is embodied in the Bengal tiger.

The repeated invocation of Bon Bibi places the narrative in a larger context. The novel’s
events are episodes in a much older story about the shifting line between humans
and the natural world. Finding the proper balance between the competing claims of
different species requires constant negotiation and mutual respect; it always has. The
motile boundaries between land and water provide Ghosh with a metaphorically rich
field upon which to play out this delicate balancing act. The story of Bon Bibi demon-
strates not only nature’s beneficence but also its continued killing power—embodied
in Dokkin Rai’s ravenous tigers. Religion and myth, however, offer no justification
for humans’ propensity to prey upon each other. The violence the Bengal tiger inflicts
upon the poor is matched or exceeded by the violence meted out by the caste system
and competing national governments. Ghosh uses tigers as a metaphor for unbridled
power, but the metaphor neither explains nor excuses humanity’s abuse of its own weakest members. *The Hungry Tide* suggests that, left to their own devices, all the Sundarbans’ inhabitants can co-exist as Bon Bibi would have them do, through a process of constant, creative adaptation.

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The authors of the 12 essays in this volume extend the amorphous body of philosophical pragmatism to address humans’ relationships with nonhuman animals. These essays are divided into three sections. The first lays the foundation of pragmatic thought as it relates to animals. The second delineates nonhuman animals’ moral standing in the context of pragmatism. The third addresses specific situations or issues involving animals through the lens of pragmatic thought.

The editors hope the book proves useful for those interested in pragmatism and the moral standing of animals. They recognize that philosophers have little practical role in matters of modern public debate, but believe that their contributions to the issue of expanding the moral community to include nonhuman animals may be an important exception. Given the broad practical influence enjoyed by the philosophical Singer-Regan debate, these pragmatists hope to join the fray with this branch of philosophy, which they find particularly relevant given its bent toward making “philosophical labor more relevant to public concerns” (p. 4). Certainly this contribution attains its modest goal of “add[ing] to the chorus participating in a lively set of philosophical debates” but may not reach its loftier ambition of influencing public deliberations on these questions (p. 4).

Rather than providing cohesive treatment of pragmatic thought as it applies to questions of human-nonhuman relationships, this collection provides snapshots of pragmatic thought as it may extend to those relationships. Several essayists (Albrecht, Fesmire, Light & McKenna, Minteer, McKenna) set forth the predominant debate between Singer’s utilitarianism and Regan’s rightist positions. Others dismiss more progressive positions put forward by Francione’s (1996) abolitionism before addressing
issues and questions through the lens of pragmatism. Pragmatic thought, as it relates to human-nonhuman relationships, can be extended from the initial ideas of these thinkers, because none exhausts pragmatic inquiry into the subject matter addressed.

Dewey’s pragmatism provides a common element from which almost all these authors work. Although Deweyan animal ethics may be oxymoronic on its face, as noted by Fesmire (p. 48), these authors draw out Dewey’s underlying pragmatic bases and extend them to the subject matter under consideration. The best examples in this volume illustrate that this approach seems reasonable; however, in other essays, it seems convoluted. Notably, Anderson eschews Dewey altogether and, using Peirce-based phenomenological perception, develops a fluent basis for extending moral consideration to animals. Comparably, Thompson focuses on “types” of animal ethics, rather than “searching the texts of [...] Dewey [...] for [...] thoughts on animals” (p. 143).

Because Dewey argued that animals lacked the (a) mental capacity; (b) emotional vitality; (c) sense of community; and (d) ability to communicate to warrant inclusion in the moral community, modern pragmatists may better contribute to the public debate by smoothing out the seeming inconsistencies between Dewey’s actual conclusions and Deweyan-derived animal pragmatism. Otherwise, general readership may naturally view this position with suspicion. Inclusion of essays containing more rigorous inquiry might correct this perceived foundational crack in animal pragmatism and persuade non-philosophers of the value of pragmatism’s promise to this debate. McReynolds does this well in his award-winning essay, in which he lucidly draws out Dewey’s distinctions between human and nonhuman animals as revealing more about Dewey’s views concerning human society than the moral status of animals (p. 70). Welchman, too, parses Dewey’s comments on animal experimentation from his pragmatism. Similarly, Lekan helpfully devotes space to explaining his “contradiction of a founding pragmatist” (p. 194).

The editors view pragmatists’ roles as helping to shape “theoretical and strategic approaches” and providing “useful [...] intervention[ion] in the more strident forms of the debates” (p. 11). However, the essays are written in the esoteric language of philosophers and are not easily accessible to those not indoctrinated into academic philosophy. Building a philosophical approach on the anti-foundationalism of pragmatism may require just such language, but these essays may not be an easy read for the average policymaker embroiled in making real-world decisions. Minteer provides the notable exception, because he directly relates Deweyan pragmatism to contemporary dispute-resolution models (pp. 111, 112).
Legal scholars and policymakers may find these philosophers’ insistence on writing in first person troublesome, as it constantly requires examination of the argument for bias or self-serving purposes. If pragmatists wish to join the practical world of legal and policy problem solving, they must abandon the language of self-reflection and banter between and among themselves and embrace third-person argument that stands on its own merits independent of the writer’s identity. Welchman’s well-argued contribution, for example, reflects reasoning devoid of self.

The book does not address Francione’s abolitionism well. For example, Francione does not reject all incremental improvements in animal welfare (p. 131), but argues explicitly in favor of incremental improvements that represent incremental reductions in the property status of animals (pp. 190-219). Similarly, Francione does not “focus solely on animal rights legislation” or “overlook [. . .] [and] [. . .] ignore” the actions of local grassroots groups (p. 211). Instead, Francione argues against pursuing rights legislation (pp. 147-189), except for efforts that seek to reduce the property status of animals (pp. 190-219). Francione also emphasizes the importance of local grassroots efforts, criticizes People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals for closing its local chapters, and criticizes national movements in general for not providing support to grassroots efforts (pp. 71-74). Disappointingly, the essayists and editors—in a thoroughly unpragmatic manner—dismiss, or do not address, Francione’s argument that traditional animal welfare fails to do anything more than entrench and increase animal exploitation.

Although this volume presents a promising school of thought to bridge the divisive debate between animal welfarists and animal rightists, it largely ignores the abolitionists’ viewpoints. Although readers will not leave sated with answers or foundational dogma—and pragmatism makes no promises that they should—they may leave with a call to getting to what matters, rather than hanging on to tired, theoretical impasses.

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**Notes**

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2  Winner of the Ila and John Mellow Prize at the 30th Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy.
Light & McKenna correctly state Francione’s position in an endnote to the Introduction chapter (p. 16, note 3).

Reference

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