Foreword

In 1971, three young Oxford philosophers—Roslind and Stanley Godlovitch, and John Harris—published *Animals, Men and Morals*. The volume marked the first time philosophers had collaborated to craft a book that dealt with the moral status of nonhuman animals. At the time of its publication, the editors could not have understood how important their effort would prove to be. Or why.

As for the why: another young Oxford philosopher, the editors' friend, Peter Singer, was so impressed with the book that he submitted an unsolicited review to the *New York Review of Books*. Against all the odds, it was accepted. Published in 1973, Singer's review was something of a social bombshell. So large was the response, so intense the interest, that the editors of *NYRB* asked Singer if he would consider writing a book himself. It was an offer the young philosopher could not refuse.

Two years later, Singer's *Animal Liberation* burst upon the scene. From that day forward, "the animal question" had a place at the table set by Oxbridge-style analytic moral philosophers, and a legitimate place at that. In the past twenty-five years, these philosophers have written more on "the animal question" than philosophers of whatever stripe had written in the previous two thousand. Such an outpouring of focused scholarship, unique to the discipline's history, would never have occurred but for the slim volume, now largely forgotten, put together by John Harris and the Godlovitchs. Of such ironies is history sometimes made.

To make reference to "the animal question" is, of course, to oversimplify. There is no single "animal question," even among those philosophers who work in the analytic tradition. Difficult questions

in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language demand attention. Is it possible for someone to have beliefs and desires while lacking the ability to use a language such as English or German? If nonhuman animals have beliefs and desires that are independent of such linguistic proficiency, how can we specify their content? Again, if nonhuman animals have minds, is it possible for us to understand what they are like? If so, how? If not, how can we avoid an unbridled skepticism about what it is like to be one of them—a bat, for instance?

In the wake of *Animal Liberation*, "the animal question" also has attracted the attention of moral and political philosophers in the analytic mold. Are any animals other than the human morally considerable? Singer, who answers this question from the perspective of a utilitarian, gives an affirmative answer: all sentient beings, whether human or not, are morally considerable. Others, like John Rawls, who answers from a contractarian perspective, give a negative answer: only beings who possess a "sense of justice" are morally considerable.

Why Singer and Rawls answer the question as they do is important certainly. Arguably, however, what is more important is that both recognize the necessity of asking it. Expressed another way, perhaps what is most important is the *centrality* "the animal question" has come to have in contemporary analytic moral and political philosophy. How very far these philosophers have come in less than a hundred years! It was 1903 when analytic philosophy's patron saint, George Edward Moore, published his classic, *Principia Ethica*. You can read every word in it. You can read between every line of it. Look where you will, you will not find the slightest hint of attention to "the animal question." Natural and nonnatural properties, yes. Definitions and analyses, yes. The open-question argument and the method of isolation, yes. But so much as a word about nonhuman animals? No. Serious moral philosophy, of the analytic variety, back then did not traffic with such ideas.

It does so now. The recognition that serious moral and political philosophy must address "the animal question" represents a change in the discipline it may take another hundred years for sociologists and anthropologists to understand.

It has been my privilege to be one voice in the choir of analytic philosophers pressing for consideration of "the animal question."

Very much a product of the analytic tradition, I have used what tools I have acquired, as best I can, even as I realized that, like all tools, there are some things—and these important things—my sort of tools are not suited to do well, or at all. Which is why (it must be almost ten years ago now) I began encouraging philosophers with a different set of tools to apply them to "the animal question," as they conceive it.

How very gratifying it is, therefore, to have been asked to write a short foreword to this important collection of papers. Here, for the first time, we have a volume where the tools of philosophy fashioned on the continent are used to explore the contours of our knowledge of, and encounters with, other than human animals. Not that continental philosophy's most influential thinkers (I have in mind philosophers like Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Lyotard, Derrida, and Levinas) have had nothing to say on this topic. On the contrary, if this collection does nothing else, it will succeed in drawing attention to the large volume of extant work that takes up "the animal question" in a distinctively continental way.

I have no doubt, however, that this book will do much more than this. In particular, the rich assortment of continental voices that speak from these pages will, I think, help foster a larger conversation among those philosophers who prefer tools of continental design. Like *Animals, Men and Morals*, I believe *Animal Others* will help ensure that "the animal question" becomes as central to continental as it is to analytic philosophy. Only there will be this important difference: unlike *Animals, Men and Morals, Animal Others* will likely play a more durable role than any review, however impassioned or insightful.

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