

# The Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series

## **Series Editors**

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In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the ethics of our treatment of animals. Philosophers have led the way, and now a range of other scholars have followed from historians to social scientists. From being a marginal issue, animals have become an emerging issue in ethics and in multidisciplinary inquiry. This series will explore the challenges that Animal Ethics poses, both conceptually and practically, to traditional understandings of human-animal relations. Specifically, the Series will:

- provide a range of key introductory and advanced texts that map out ethical positions on animals;
- publish pioneering work written by new, as well as accomplished, scholars;
- produce texts from a variety of disciplines that are multidisciplinary in character or have multidisciplinary relevance.

For further information or to submit a proposal for consideration, please contact Amy Invernizzi, [amy.invernizzi@palgrave-usa.com](mailto:amy.invernizzi@palgrave-usa.com).

Idan Breier

# An Ethical View of Human-Animal Relations in the Ancient Near East

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*In memory of Drs Tibor and Stephania (Dora) Vago who, while  
physicians, were first and foremost human beings*

## Series Editors' Preface

This is a new book series for a new field of inquiry: Animal Ethics.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the ethics of our treatment of animals. Philosophers have led the way, and now a range of other scholars have followed from historians to social scientists. From being a marginal issue, animals have become an emerging issue in ethics and in multidisciplinary inquiry.

In addition, a rethink of the status of animals has been fuelled by a range of scientific investigations which have revealed the complexity of animal sentience, cognition and awareness. The ethical implications of this new knowledge have yet to be properly evaluated, but it is becoming clear that the old view that animals are mere things, tools, machines or commodities cannot be sustained ethically.

But it is not only philosophy and science that are putting animals on the agenda. Increasingly, in Europe and the United States, animals are becoming a political issue as political parties vie for the “green” and “animal” vote. In turn, political scientists are beginning to look again at the history of political thought in relation to animals, and historians are beginning to revisit the political history of animal protection.

As animals grow as an issue of importance, so there have been more collaborative academic ventures leading to conference volumes, special journal issues, indeed new academic animal journals as well.

Moreover, we have witnessed the growth of academic courses, as well as university posts, in Animal Ethics, Animal Welfare, Animal Rights, Animal Law, Animals and Philosophy, Human-Animal Studies, Critical Animal Studies, Animals and Society, Animals in Literature, Animals and Religion—tangible signs that a new academic discipline is emerging.

“Animal Ethics” is the new term for the academic exploration of the moral status of the non-human—an exploration that explicitly involves a focus on what we owe animals morally, and which also helps us to understand the influences—social, legal, cultural, religious and political—that legitimate animal abuse. This series explores the challenges that Animal Ethics poses, both conceptually and practically, to traditional understandings of human-animal relations.

The series is needed for three reasons: (1) to provide the texts that will service the new university courses on animals; (2) to support the increasing number of students studying and academics researching in animal related fields, and (3) because there is currently no book series that is a focus for multidisciplinary research in the field.

Specifically, the series will

- provide a range of key introductory and advanced texts that map out ethical positions on animals;
- publish pioneering work written by new, as well as accomplished, scholars, and
- produce texts from a variety of disciplines that are multidisciplinary in character or have multidisciplinary relevance.

The new Palgrave Macmillan Series on Animal Ethics is the result of a unique partnership between Palgrave Macmillan and the Ferrater Mora Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. The series is an integral part of the mission of the Centre to put animals on the intellectual agenda by facilitating academic research and publication. The series is also a natural complement to one of the Centre's other major projects, the *Journal of Animal Ethics*. The Centre is an independent “think tank” for the

advancement of progressive thought about animals, and is the first Centre of its kind in the world. It aims to demonstrate rigorous intellectual enquiry and the highest standards of scholarship. It strives to be a world-class centre of academic excellence in its field.

We invite academics to visit the Centre's website [www.oxfordanimalethics.com](http://www.oxfordanimalethics.com) and to contact us with new book proposals for the series.

Oxford, UK

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Clair Linzey



# Acknowledgments

This volume takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the ancient Near East, Hebrew Bible, philosophy, theology, and zoology. Alongside my exploration of the political and social history of the biblical and ancient Near Eastern eras I have long examined the field of Human-Animal Studies (HAS), guided and supported by Prof. Emeritus Joseph (Yossi) Terkel of the School of Zoology at Tel Aviv University. My historical work being comparative and interdisciplinary, discussion of HAS has proved a challenging task. Some years ago, I made the acquaintance of Prof. Andrew Linzey of Oxford, who encouraged me develop my interest in animal ethics. This has prompted a slew of articles published in the pages of the *Journal of Animal Ethics* published by the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics headed by Prof. Andrew Linzey and Dr Clair Linzey and other volumes initiated by the chief editor. My thanks go to these prominent scholars for encouraging my interest in HAS and specialization in its ethical aspects.

My deep gratitude also goes to my teachers and colleagues at Bar-Ilan University and the University of Haifa from whom I have learned a great deal—and, of course, to my family for their dedicated support over all the years. I also wish to thank Liat Keren for her limpid translation of my Hebrew manuscript into English. The volume is dedicated to the memory of Drs Tibor and Stephania (Dora) Vago—physicians who were first

and foremost human beings. As many have noted before me, animals themselves make us human (Grandin & Johnson, 2009). In times of human conflict, they identify the island of humanity in the hell human-kind creates. As Levinas remarks of his time in incarceration in Fallingbøstel prisoner of war camp:

... about halfway through our long captivity, for a few short weeks, before the sentinels chased him away, a wandering dog entered our lives. One day he came to meet this rabble as we returned under guard from work. He survived in some wild patch in the region of the camp. But we called him Bobby, an exotic name, as one does with a cherished dog. He would appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt that we were men. ... He was a descendant of the dogs of Egypt.<sup>1</sup> And his friendly growling, his animal faith, was born from the silence of his forefathers on the banks of the Nile. (Levinas, 1997, p. 153)

## Bibliography

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. "But not even a dog will threaten any of the sons of Israel, nor anything from person to animal so that you may learn how the Lord distinguishes between Egypt and Israel" (Exod. 11:7).

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