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## BOOK REVIEWS

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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# Linguistic Deception: Effects of Language Use on Interactions With Nonhuman Animals

**Animal Equality: Language and Liberation.** Joan Dunayer. Durwood, Maryland: Ryce Publishing, 2001, 283 pages, \$25.00 (hardcover).

Reviewed by Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence  
Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine

*Animal Equality* represents an innovative study. It is the first full-length book devoted exclusively to the relationship between language choice and human interactions with nonhuman animals. Joan Dunayer demonstrates that standard English usage legitimizes, trivializes, and conceals abuse of nonhumans, and she establishes the connection between speciesism and language as a valid field of inquiry. She shows that choices of terms, word forms, and syntax in writing about nonhumans serve to remove the focus from the suffering or death of the victims. Use of singular references to plural animals, for example, allows the discounting of animals as individuals, and minimizes their capacity for sentience. Euphemisms are employed to disguise the suffering and death that humans routinely inflict upon nonhumans.

The author argues that deceptive language allows people to disguise and deny the pain they cause their victims during various types of interactions with nonhuman animals. Absence of gender designation—that is, referring to a nonhuman as “it”—causes animals to be grouped with inanimate objects, thus rendered incapable of feeling and perception, and therefore unworthy of treatment on a par with that provided for humans who possess these capacities. Additionally, establishing “separate lexicons” (p. 2) for humans and animals creates a false dichotomy between people

and other living beings. For example, humans “eat,” whereas animals “feed”; animals “are watered,” rather than given water; a woman is “pregnant” and “nurses”; a female animal “gestates” and “lactates.” Concern for offspring is “motherly love” in women, but “maternal instinct” in animal mothers. Nonhumans who develop bonds with companions are said to show “affiliative behavior,” rather than “friendship” as humans know it. Such language denies human–animal shared experience and kinship. Most important, a dominant concept in literature and speech dictates that humans act according to “intelligence” and that animals routinely behave according to “instinct.” Dunayer, however, provides many well-documented examples of animal behavior exhibiting intelligence and forethought, so that readers are convinced of the inaccuracy and injustice of that view. When animals are perceived as lacking cognition and emotion, they are seen as morally inferior and consequently assumed to be appropriate objects for exploitation and mistreatment. As the author so aptly points out, even though acknowledging animals’ mental capacities may cause them to merit more equitable treatment at the hands of humans, “few people would welcome laws that protected humans in proportion to their abilities or contributions. . . . The law protects all humans whatever their degree of intelligence, sensitivity, or altruism” (p. 4). Dunayer questions why nonhumans do not enjoy the same rights.

The common practice of describing nonhuman animals as single entities, groups, or species, rather than as individuals, contributes to their purported inferior status compared to humans, who are routinely considered individuals. Expressions like “the cheetah,” or “head of cattle,” and “pieces of game” deny personhood to nonhumans, reducing their status, so that they may be abused and killed with impunity. Viewing them as a group makes them seem mindless “stock,” more akin to “crops,” “machines,” and “tools,” than beings with distinct personalities. Yet Dunayer cites indisputable evidence of surprising variations in temperament and innovative behavior among certain members of such diverse species as octopuses and songbirds, who were formerly viewed as completely alike—virtual automatons.

Separate chapters of *Animal Equality* are devoted to language commonly used in various activities and settings involving human–animal interactions. Language used by hunters, Dunayer asserts, camouflages the suffering and death of prey. Calling their activity “sport,” “recreation,” and “wildlife management” hides violence. Hunters “harvest” or “bag” their quarry, referred to as “game,” “targets,” “meat,” or “trophies.” Often blaming their victims to justify their killing (Dunayer terms it “murder”), hunters call them “varmints” (vermin) who “infest” an area, “pests,” or “nuisances” (as bears in national parks). Certain birds are given evil epithets—“filthy,” “murderous,” or “destructive.” Nonhumans are likened to vegetables: “the annual fawn crop,” a “bumper crop of deer.” Animals matter only at the species level; hunters often speak of “how much deer shot,” rather than numbers killed.

Deceptive language used in sportfishing masks the cruelty of this activity. Intentionally prolonging the fish’s agonizing ordeal on the line is called “play” or

“exercise.” “Catch and release” programs, which might seem humane, actually cause pain and terror, with a large percentage of fish dying within a few days. Regarding their “catch” as insentient “specimens” or “trophies,” fish are “recycled” and “harvested.” Fish are “adversaries” in a “battle,” which the author asserts represents needless infliction of suffering and death.

Zoos are prisons with cages, not the advertised “homes” or “habitats.” The touted freedom from extinction involves species, not individuals. Zoo inmates are actually captives to whom cruel punishments are meted out for disobeying their “keepers,” even though their behavior was brought on by zoo conditions. Dunayer denies the purported role of zoos as conservation organizations; instead, they represent the pre-Darwinian view of people as observers and manipulators of animals who serve to gratify human desires. Although apologists justify zoos for their alleged education, research, and preservation of species, the author cites evidence that these functions fail to operate.

Similarly, marine parks and aquariums do not foster conservation as they claim, but entail abuse of captives disguised by linguistic deception. Capture of animals is euphemized as “collection”; small confining tanks are “homes,” “pools,” or “enclosures.” Cruel confinement is justified by providing freedom from predators and abolishment of the need to hunt for food. Advertised as education rather than entertainment, aquariums fail to teach spectators about the animals they see. Rather, Dunayer points out, programs at these parks display human dominance over nonhumans by means of demeaning tricks.

Vivisection, linked to science, survives with the aid of language that falsifies. Known as “biomedical research,” vivisection involves the avoidance of “suffering,” substituting “distress.” In fact, vivisectionists deny animals’ capacity for suffering. Jargon obscures sentience: Animals who cry out in pain are said to “exhibit vocalization responses.” “Stress” is used, never “torture,” which Dunayer claims is the appropriate word. A scalded animal is “thermally injured” and a blinded one is “visually deprived.” Food deprivation is “restricted diet,” rather than starvation. To kill is to “produce lethality,” “terminate,” or “go into data.” “Discard” or “dispose of” reduces the nonhuman to trash or dirt. A common euphemism for killing is “sacrifice,” suggesting no research animal dies in vain, but also denoting ritual torture. Subjects are “inventory,” “supplies,” “tools,” and “organisms,” “lab animals,” grouped as a single entity. Vivisectionists choose passive verbs, as though to deny their own role in procedures and absolve themselves of guilt: “cardiac arrest was produced”; “rats sustained burns.” Often they imply that victims volunteer: “a monkey took part in the procedure,” “a sheep donated blood.” Calling animals “coworkers” implies willing participation. Lab animals are vilified, as in the agonizing experiments of Harlow who labeled monkeys “abusive” and “cruel.”

Cruelty in animal agriculture, Dunayer reveals, is masked by language. “Toe-clipping” in chickens, suggesting mere nail trimming, substitutes for the reality of amputation without anesthesia. Pain from branding, dehorning, and castration of

cattle is termed “short-term discomfort.” Death is “production mortality” or “inventory shrinkage.” Rather than being slaughtered, animals “go to market.” Meat from cattle is disguised as “beef,” from pigs, “pork, ham, or bacon,” and from lambs, “mutton.” Only where there is aversion to eating it is flesh known by its true name—“horse, dog, or rabbit meat.” Thymus or pancreas is transformed to plant food: “sweetbreads.” Nonhumans in food systems are demeaned as “machines,” or “production units.” Pets are defined as animals people do not eat.

Dunayer’s discussion of animal metaphors reveals the ways that women, Blacks, and Indians have been visualized in animal terms to denigrate them, and she describes the frequent use of animal images as terms of insult. She suggests that clichés such as “beat a dead horse,” “bleed like a stuck pig,” and “kill two birds with one stone” trivialize violence toward animals. Calling sex offenders “predators,” violent criminals “animals,” and describing ruthless people “clawing their way to the top” does harm to the animal cause.

The author laments that there is no legal recourse for pain and suffering in nonhumans, because they are property, and emphasizes that they must have personhood to obtain the equal moral and legal rights they need and deserve. In a just society, she asserts, human and animal interests would have equal weight.

Dunayer provides useful style guidelines for countering speciesism, advising readers what language to use and what to avoid in writing about animals. A valuable feature of the book is the thesaurus designating terms to avoid and alternatives to use for each of the topics covered in the chapters. In *Animal Equality*, Dunayer has proved her thesis: The way we speak and write about animals is inseparable from the way we treat them. This extraordinary book is highly recommended for anyone working in the field of human–animal interactions and especially for animal rights proponents who need readily available data to support their arguments. The work is as much a guide for activists as it is a scholarly treatise. It will be especially valuable for teachers of human–animal relationships and bioethics. Scientists who write and speak about their work with animals will find it useful for gaining new understanding about the manipulation of language in their reports. The book does a service in exposing cruelties to animals that may not be generally known. In calling for honest rather than deceitful language, Dunayer has advanced the cause of animal liberation by detailing one vitally important way to help bring about more just and equitable treatment for nonhumans.

#### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence is a veterinarian, as well as a cultural anthropologist. Dr. Lawrence is professor emerita in the Department of Environmental and Population Health at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, North

Grafton, Massachusetts. Her teaching, research, and publications are in the field of human–animal relationships. Among her books are *Rodeo: An Anthropologist Looks at the Wild and the Tame*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984; and *Hunting the Wren: Transformation of Bird to Symbol*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997. Honors received for her work include the Distinguished Scholar Award of the International Association of Human–Animal Interaction Organizations.

## The Education of the Ethical Researcher

**Responsible Conduct of Research.** Adil E. Shamoo and David Resnik. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 345 pages, \$65.00 (hardcover).

Reviewed by David J. Pittenger  
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

The twentieth century witnessed fundamental changes in the nature and status of science as an enterprise. Advances in research methodology have allowed scientists to examine complex problems within the biological, physical, and social sciences. Researchers in biology and medicine, for instance, began to conduct invasive experiments using living humans, a relatively rarity before the 1900s. At the same time, there was rapid expansion in financial support from private and public sectors for basic and applied research. In many countries, the money spent on all forms of scientific research increased to become a notable proportion of the country's gross national product. Paralleling this trend is the fact that job opportunities for scientists to work in the private sector or for the government have increased dramatically, especially during the past several decades. Consequently, empirical research is no longer the providence of wealthy individuals interested in science as an avocation or academicians teaching at various colleges and universities.

Until the end of World War II, there were no explicit ethical guidelines to inform researchers on the proper boundaries of research practice. The need to define these boundaries became apparent when the Nuremberg trials revealed the atrocities committed by Nazi researchers. The resulting Nuremberg Code identified the rights of research participants and became the framework for the codes of conduct

that various research-oriented professional organizations established for their membership.

Unfortunately, these guidelines have not been an infallible shield that protects the welfare of those participating in biomedical research. Examples of exploitative research projects, such as the infamous Tuskegee syphilis study and the Willowbrook experiments that exposed children to the hepatitis virus, illustrate that the existence of a code of conduct is not sufficient to ensure its practice.

There have also been high-profile cases of research malfeasance and misfeasance within all the sciences. Various reports have documented cases of researchers fabricating data and making unsubstantiated claims regarding the importance and value of their work. Other cases involve researchers caught within conflicts of interest or embroiled in legal disputes over the ownership of various intellectual properties.

In reaction to evidence of research misconduct, Congress created several federal statutes that created local committees (e.g., Institutional Review Boards) and governmental agencies (e.g., Office of Research Integrity [ORI]), which oversee the activities of researchers. Those interested in the ethics of research have also called for scientists to receive training in the foundations of ethics. Indeed, the ORI (2000) has recently released its mandate that researchers study the principles of ethics that support the responsible conduct of research.

Shamoo and Resnik rise to the ORI's challenge with their admirable book, *Responsible Conduct of Research*. Shamoo, a professor of biochemistry, and Resnik, a philosopher, bring their considerable expertise and depth of knowledge to the project. Both authors have long and distinguished careers examining the many ethical dilemmas researchers face. The net result is a thoughtful and appropriately detailed primer of the ethical matters that contemporary researchers will most likely confront. In 12 chapters, the authors take on such broad topics as the integrity of data collection and analysis, authorship rights and peer review, intellectual property, conflicts of interest, and the use of humans and nonhumans in research.

Part of what makes this book a success is the authors' ability to frame the various issues within the relevant historical and contemporary context. For example, the chapter examining publication and peer review is not a formulaic account of the review process, the use of blinded reviews, or the etiquette one should exercise when writing a review. Instead, Shamoo and Resnik offer a lively account of how the exchange of ideas in press leads to the advancement within science. Similarly, they offer an interesting historical account of the rise of peer review as a necessary editorial mechanism, and provide an unapologetic account of the strengths and weaknesses of the peer review process. This context provides the necessary rationale to justify the ethical principles researchers should apply as they work through the peer review process.

A recurrent theme of the book is that science is not an isolated academic enterprise produced by individuals who are independent of others. Rather, Shamoo and Resnik offer a compelling account of the very social nature of science. Describing the social context of research allows the authors to emphasize effectively the ethical responsibilities that researchers have to fellow researchers in an enterprise that is collaborative, and to the community that supports research projects and will enjoy or suffer the consequences of empirical research. Indeed, the closing chapter, "The Scientist in Society," is perhaps one of the best short accounts of scientists' role and responsibilities as scientists and as members of society that I have read. Also effective is their second chapter, wherein they review the standard steps of research (from defining the research problems to disseminating the results) and illustrate how each step involves important ethical matters. This chapter also contains an extremely useful review of good research practices that ensure a clear audit trail, which allows one to trace the researcher's published conclusion to the original data.

Another feature that readers should appreciate are the ethical dilemmas the authors present at the end of each chapter. Although such exercises are common in ethics textbooks, these examples are realistic and sufficiently complex to elicit lively debate. What is most refreshing is the fact that the authors did not provide "answers" to the case studies. Although it is gratifying to know how the authors would resolve the problem or to learn that one agrees with the "authorities," reading such accounts robs the reader of the opportunity to wrestle with a complex problem for which there is no easy answer. In fact, offering answers to such cases may lead students to believe that they can resolve ethical dilemmas by the formulaic application of a limited set of rules. Ethics, as in all life's problems, has no easy answers. Hence, we serve our students better by forcing them to struggle with the problem, rather than readily rendering the answer for them.

There are some minor shortcomings in the book, however. The first chapter offers a standard account of the primary ethical systems. Unfortunately these reviews are cursory and do not set the stage for subsequent discussions. Of course, there is no dominant or preferred ethical perspective among those who discuss research ethics. One is equally likely to find deontological and utilitarian arguments justifying or criticizing the ethical propriety of a research method. Nevertheless, it would be instructive to show the reader how these different ethical systems respond to ethical dilemmas. Psychologists and other social scientists may also find the review of some ethical dilemmas wanting. The review of deception and necessity or informed consent is relatively terse. Similarly, there is relatively little about the ethical problem created by the use of placebo control groups.

Any concern for missing material is dwarfed by the detail that the authors provide other topics. In the chapter on research with animals, for example, Shamoo and Resnik offer a balanced account of the important differences between Singer's (1990) and Regan's (1983) philosophical perspectives and the limitations of each.

In like manner, the chapter on genetics and human reproduction research provides a careful review of what has rapidly become a “hot button” topic among researchers, ethicists, and policy makers.

In balance, the book performs as advertised: It offers the reader with a solid introduction to the ethical principles that lead to responsible research. The text is free of obfuscating language common in advanced texts on ethics and research methods. Thus, the reader is free to focus on the matter at hand—What is the best way to act as a researcher. Those who wish to introduce their students to the fundamentals of ethical principles that guide research ethics will find a good resource in this text.

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