

Deliberating Animal Values: a Pragmatic—Pluralistic Approach to Animal Ethics

Frank Kupper · Tjard De Cock Buning

Accepted: 10 May 2010 / Published online: 5 June 2010

© The Author(s) 2010. This article is published with open access at Springerlink.com

Abstract Debates in animal ethics are largely characterized by ethical monism, the search for a single, timeless, and essential trait in which the moral standing of animals can be grounded. In this paper, we argue that a monistic approach towards animal ethics hampers and oversimplifies the moral debate. The value pluralism present in our contemporary societies requires a more open and flexible approach to moral inquiry. This paper advocates the turn to a pragmatic, pluralistic approach to animal ethics. It contributes to the development of such an approach in two ways. It offers a pragmatist critique of ethical monism in animal ethics and presents the results of a qualitative study into the value diversity present in the different ways of thinking about animals in the Netherlands. Carefully arranged group discussions resulted in the reconstruction of four distinctive moral value frameworks that may serve as instruments in the future process of moral inquiry and deliberation in the reflection on animal use.

Keywords Animal ethics · Pragmatism · Value pluralism · Frame reflection · Moral deliberation

Animals are present in human life. Throughout history, relationships between humans and nonhuman animals have been existential to the meaning of cultural experience. These relationships take different forms. We use animals to satisfy our needs. We manage their lives and environments to conserve what we believe is a part of natural life. We destroy them. Worship their magnificence. And we build strong and intimate emotional connections with them as well. Still, it was only in

F. Kupper (✉) · T. De Cock Buning
Athena Institute for Research on Innovation and Communication in Health and Life Sciences,
Vrije Universiteit, De Boelelaan 1085, 1081, HV, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
e-mail: frank.kupper@falw.vu.nl

recent times, that we have witnessed a significant rise in the philosophical reflection on the moral aspects of these relationships. Since the 1970s, a vast increase of publications in both the academic field of animal ethics as well as the public realm demonstrates a growing concern for animal welfare and rights. The expansion of the domain of moral consideration to animals is now widely acknowledged.

Currently, debates in animal ethics center on the question of how the moral considerability of animals can be justified. Public debates about the use of animals in food production, animal experimentation, or new emerging technologies present us with different moral views on animals. These views might all entail a different conception of moral considerability and, therefore, a different view on what is right when it comes to the human treatment of animals. At the same time, philosophers and ethicists appear to stumble on each other in their search for a single, timeless, and essential trait in which the moral standing of animals can be grounded. This approach, known as ethical monism, has turned the philosophical debate into an abstract process of endlessly defending and refuting rival theories (Smith 2003). We will argue in this paper that a monistic approach towards animal ethics hampers and oversimplifies the moral debate. First, it does not recognize the value pluralism present in our contemporary societies. Second, it disregards the complexity of the morally problematic situations animal ethics is confronted with.

In line with a recent wave of philosophical pragmatism, which has attracted a growing number of writers in animal ethics but particularly environmental ethics, we believe the complexity of human experience requires a more open and flexible approach to moral inquiry. According to Minter and Manning (1999), the pragmatic alternative celebrates value pluralism, accepting the historical context of moral experience, and embraces an experimental approach to ethical claims. Light and McKenna (2004), editors of "Animal pragmatism," state that the strength of the pragmatic alternative is being grounded in an approach that is pluralistic, fallibilistic, and flexible. It can adapt to changing circumstances and practices, because it is not tied to principles "that are too often divorced from people's everyday lived experience."

The paper we present here contributes to the development of a pragmatic, pluralistic approach to animal ethics in two ways. First, we offer a pragmatist critique of the abundant monism in animal ethics. Second, we discuss the ethical relevance of the results of an empirical study into the value diversity present in the different ways of thinking about animals in the Netherlands. Carefully arranged group discussions resulted in the reconstruction of four distinctive frames that may serve as instruments in the process of moral inquiry and deliberation.

Ethical Monism in Animal Ethics

Ethical monism is the belief that there is a single, comprehensive, and systematic account of morality that can end indeterminacy and value conflict (Smith, 2003). It aims for a unifying principle or set of principles that enables judgment of morally problematic situations by evaluating competing values against overarching criteria. This desire for a single ethical theory for the justification of our interactions with the

world is not something unique to animal ethics. The quest for a universal ethical truth is common within mainstream moral philosophy (Williams, 1996). It dominates a long tradition exemplified by the identification and justification of general principles that will resolve the conflicts between the incompatible claims of different traditions. Nevertheless, also in the field of animal ethics the disputes between opposing ethical theories and traditions are abundant. Although these traditions rely on different and sometimes contradictory arguments, their basic concern is the same: justification of the moral value of the animal on neutral grounds (Aaltola 2005).

Monism in animal ethics centers on the justification of the claim that animals are proper objects of moral consideration. Many philosophers have proposed that there is something intrinsically valuable about the animal. An intrinsic value is valuable as an end-in-itself, not merely as a means to another end. There is on-going disagreement, however, about what quality or entity we should regard as the end-in-itself. Is it the animal itself? Its genome? Or its interests and needs? The literature on animal ethics contains many elaborated and worthwhile accounts of the moral considerability of animals (Armstrong and Botzler, 2003; Garner 2005). Here, we will briefly outline the arguments of a few important contributors. We do not mean to provide an extensive discussion of their arguments here. We merely want to put forward that although these arguments build on different criteria for moral considerability, they share a similar structure: the monistic justification of considerability in one, single moral standard. Take for example the moral standard of animal suffering, as proposed by Singer's utilitarianism. According to Singer (1990) *sentient beings*, able to experience states of pain and pleasure, should not be exposed to (unnecessary) suffering. But how can we know where to draw the line between the domain of sentient beings (that deserve our moral consideration) and the domain of non-sentient beings? Singer's forceful line of reasoning resulted in a vast amount of literature about the extent to which certain animals have conscious experience and therefore, moral status. Regan, another important contributor to animal ethics, argues that animals are something more than the "vessels of sentient welfare" utilitarians make of them (Regan 1986). His deontological theory of animal rights maintains that it is not the interest that matters, but the individual animal that has the interest. Because animals are *subjects of life*, we have to respect them as ends-in-themselves (Regan 1988). Also here, we would have to decide on what it means to be a subject of life. Regan refers to beings that have beliefs and desires and the ability to evaluate their own lives. Other theorists, like Taylor (1986), however, contend that all living beings are a subject of a life. Rollin, another main player in the animal ethics field, has adopted an evolutionary version of the Aristotelian concept of *telos*, which refers to the unique, evolutionary shaped set of needs and interests that characterizes an animal (Rollin 1989). Also, the concept of *telos*, however, is surrounded by persisting discussions about its teleological nature and the question whether the *telos* itself or the forthcoming interests and needs have to be regarded as the ends-in-themselves (Holland 1995).

In the attempt to ground the respect for animals in a single and fundamental ethical concept, some aspect of the animal that is an end-in-itself, philosophical debates about the value of animals appear to run into a number of epistemological

and metaphysical problems and enduring disagreements. Also Smith (2003), evaluating the role of ethical monism in environmental ethics, observed that not only in environmental ethics itself but also in the broader field of moral philosophy the main preoccupation of philosophers seems to be the defense and refutation of competing systematic theories. In the pursuit of irrefutable arguments, he indicated, thought experiments have become more and more hypothetical, trying to create an ethical theory that can deal with all potential situations. Like Musschenga (1992) noted, it seems impossible that philosophers will ever find conclusive arguments to “end such debates, not even those inside themselves.” The quest for a single, systematic theory to guide our ethical judgments presumably originates from the desire to overcome the conflict and indeterminacy present in many of the complex moral situations we have to deal with. In line with Smith (2003), we argue that ethical monism rather limits the necessary consideration of the variety of relationships between humanity and non-human nature.

A Pragmatist’s Approach Towards the Value of Animals

In recent years, monistic approaches have been criticized by a new wave of pragmatists for their failure to get a full grasp on the complexity and diversity of real morally problematic situations (Keulartz et al. 2003; Andrew Light and Katz 1996; Minter and Manning 1999). These writers are inspired by the school of philosophical pragmatism, originating from the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey in the late 19th and early 20th century. In this section, we will argue that philosophical pragmatism, and mainly the work of John Dewey, may offer some fruitful options to deal with the flaws of ethical monism.

Dewey’s Reconstruction of Ethics

Dewey’s philosophical pragmatism is known for its anti-foundational character. He conceived of reality as a process, characterized by continuity, contingency, and change (Dewey 1920). Hence, he firmly rejected the search for absolute foundations or absolute truths. All our convictions have a provisional nature and should remain susceptible to critical appraisal. Dewey (1932) strongly objected to the habit of moral philosophy to treat its favored categories and distinctions as if they were real existing entities, independent of any context and its human interpretation. He criticized the view of morality as an external, autonomous domain, independent of the context of moral experience. Dewey, on the contrary, emphasized the central role of experience in the development of our relations and interactions with the world around us. Through experience we become aware of a moral problem. Minter et al. (2004) pointed out that the role of past experience is important in Dewey’s philosophical program because it continues to demonstrate our persistent struggle with the presence of conflicting values in our moral judgment, due to the complexity of a morally problematic situation. Dewey regarded the tendency to absolutize ethics as a failure to see that any meaningful inquiry occurs within the unique context of a situation. He criticized traditional approaches to the dilemmas of

moral experience for not recognizing the complexity of morally problematic situations as well as the novel demands and circumstances of new situations (Minteer et al. 2004). The first important element in Dewey's reconstruction of ethics is a transfer of its focus from the justification of absolute moral principles to the inquiry of *morally problematic situations*.

Dewey regarded the uncritical approval of fixed notions and ideas as extremely unproductive. The complexity of human experience much rather requires an experimental, open, and flexible method of moral inquiry. In order to meet the demands of morally problematic situations arising in our experience, we have to develop creative-intelligent responses to these situations. The importance of *creative-intelligent inquiry* is the second important element of Dewey's reconstruction of ethics. It testifies to a firm belief in the ability of individuals (and communities) to examine the needs of a problematic situation and reconstruct the moral resources accumulated in experience in order to critically appraise and evaluate it (Minteer et al. 2004). This relates to the third aspect of Dewey's reconstruction of ethics. The way moral experience is "felt" and "lived" is always constructed in relation to other members of a moral community. The undeniably social context of morality, therefore, not only requires individual reflection but also *public deliberation*.

Dewey's Critique of Monism

Because of the complex and changing circumstances of those situations, Dewey's radical pragmatism rejects the monistic application of a single principle or set of principles developed prior to reflection on morally problematic situations. In Dewey's view moral principles should be seen as only a part of the entire process of appraisal and inquiry into our moral experience of problematic situations (Dewey and Tufts 1932). A priori selection of one (or a few) of them would merely hamper open intelligent moral inquiry. Minteer et al. (2004) has argued that, in understanding the open-ended nature of moral experience, philosophical pragmatism embraces the truth of value pluralism. Since there is no a priori, context-independent way to rank the diverse values present in our moral experience, Minteer proceeded, morally problematic situations will have to be resolved by practical deliberations of those values. This does not mean that moral values or principles have to be dismissed. They are merely conceived of as hypothetical solutions to a morally problematic situation. In such a way, the "rightness" of a moral claim does not depend on the intrinsic nature of a value or principle underlying this claim, but on the extent to which it contributes to the resolution of specific morally problematic situations. This contribution can only be determined in a process of thoughtful and reflective inquiry. Minteer concludes that ethical theories in a pragmatic sense are seen as critical tools—instruments—for analyzing and interpreting moral problems and conflicts, not fixed ends or positions that we have to grant some privileged philosophical status.

Ethics as a Process of Inquiry and Deliberation

Traditionally, the focus of animal ethics has been substantive, aimed at the justification of the moral considerability of animals. Dewey's fear was that fixed

ends, because of their *a priori*, absolutist, and foundational character, would merely obstruct moral inquiry. If one looks at the value debates in animal ethics, Dewey's fear, at least to some extent, became reality. The standards for grounding the individual value of the animal are often treated as non-negotiable ends-in-themselves. In their attempts to justify these standards, philosophers end up in endless boundary and definition discussions. In the meantime, a rich diversity of values that can have a meaningful relation to the problematic situation at hand is precluded from thoughtful inquiry and deliberation. Dewey's reconstruction of ethics results in a procedural view of ethics in which values and principles emerge through the method of experimental inquiry and deliberation. It redefines ethics as a particular way of solving moral problems. It suggests that we should address the moral conflicts in animal ethics as practical disputes that demand for cooperative inquiry and deliberation rather than abstract philosophical debates (Minteer 2004).

The Value Lab Method: Interactive Exploration of Value Frameworks

The first step in a pragmatic approach to animal ethics would be creating the space for a process of moral inquiry into the intuitions, values, and beliefs of the cultural contexts in which our interactions with animals take place. This paper presents the empirical results of a study into the value pluralism present in the ways of thinking about animals in the Netherlands. To this end, we developed a deliberative instrument that we dubbed the *value lab* tool. Application of the value lab tool facilitated the joint reflection of a broad range of Dutch citizens on their values and beliefs regarding animals and the human- animal relationship. The meaning of those values and beliefs do not exist as mental entities in the minds of people, but are actively negotiated and constructed during the course of social interaction (Burningham 1995; Potter and Wetherell 1987). Given this relational construction of beliefs, Waterton and Wynne (1999) have recommended a more reflexive framework for research into the meaning of values and beliefs. The method of focus groups has in recent years become recognized as this site of social interaction through which meaning and understanding are co-constructed (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999; Madriz 2000). The *value lab* method we have developed merges the idea of social interaction in focus groups with an explicit *in-depth* focus on underlying value frameworks. In the small discussion group setting of the *value lab*, participants acted as co-researchers, inductively constructing their own frames of reference. The methodological steps taken to facilitate the participants' philosophical reflection on their own ways of thinking and the subsequent reconstruction of value frameworks have been elaborately reported and discussed in another paper (Kupper et al. 2007). Here, we will merely address the main methodological choices that were made.

Creating a Conversational Context

The discussion setting needed to fulfill two conditions. First, it had to be a thrustworthy and non-threatening environment in which participants feel at ease and

open to freely express their thoughts and beliefs. Second, it needed to facilitate in-depth exploration of what was brought up; ultimately producing images of the underlying value frameworks. We accomplished this setting through the implementation of two guiding principles. We strived for homogeneity in the discussion groups and worked with structured exercises. In addition, the discussions were moderated by experienced and skilled group facilitators.

Participant Selection and Group Composition

The selection of participants explicitly aimed at the qualitative variation—not the statistical representativeness of ideas about animals. We were interested in a so-called cognitive representation of the diversity of viewpoints. Therefore, we strived for homogeneity *within* the groups and heterogeneity *between* the groups. We selected participants through a wide range of social organizations associated with certain viewpoints on the animal issue. However, we did not select the official representatives of those groups or movements and explicitly addressed the participants as citizens with their own sets of values and concerns. The groups were composed by comparing various criteria to establish groups of (more or less) congenial minds. Of course, the collected material of the group discussions was used afterwards to analyze the actual perspectives on animal issues. All sessions were organized between January 26 and April 8, 2004. The workshops were held in different regions of the Netherlands, geographically spread across the country. The 16 value lab sessions ranged in size from 5 to 11 participants but contained a total number of 109 participants. Our methodological paper has addressed the issues of selection, composition, and representation more profoundly.

Workshop Design

The value lab design was standardized for all groups and semi-structured. Each group discussion was 2–3 h in duration. Sessions were recorded on video and audio tape for further analysis. All participants consented to these recordings on conditions of anonymity and restricted use of the recordings just for the purpose of this study. The collective activity of the group consisted of a step-by-step circling in on the variety and richness of ideas. The group conversation gradually moved from intuitions to the articulation and systematization of value concepts through the repetitive use of structuring exercises. Through this process of inquiry, the participants constructed an interrelated network of the concepts they particularly valued about animals, framed in *their* language and *their* ways of viewing the world.

Frame Reconstruction: Qualitative Analysis

Subsequently, we as the researchers reconstructed the value frameworks in which the group stories were grounded, adopting a grounded theory approach (Baarda et al. 2005; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Coding and analysis of the discussion material was an iterative process in a continuous exchange between raw data and the analytical categorizations researchers developed during the study. Different

members of the coding team independently and jointly coded the transcript fragments into value concepts and categories. As the methodological paper elaborately explains, the cycles of independent analysis and joint interpretation have warranted the shared interpretative validity of research process and products (Kupper et al. 2007). During the value lab sessions and subsequent analysis it quickly became clear that although each group went through its unique process, there were marked similarities and differences at a conceptual level. Systematic interpretation of those similarities and differences rendered four distinctive value patterns.

Framing Issues: Making Meaning

We defined the resulting patterns, the reconstructed value frameworks as moral “*frames of reference*.” The concept of “frame” is used in several theoretical traditions, such as cognitive psychology, social movement studies and policy analysis, as summarized by Swaffield (1998). According to Schön and Rein (1994), frames are particular ways of making sense of a complex reality and guiding our actions. They consist of structures of values and beliefs about a certain situation or object. When individuals describe or define the “same” situation or object using different concepts and language, they are using different frames (Douglas 1986). Also the frames of animal value provide the constructs and patterns to make the animal itself and the human- animal relationship meaningful to ourselves and others. It is important to note that these frames, as Fisher (1997) has argued, are “unfinished constructions.” Frames are representations of meaning that belong to a social rather than individual level. They are selectively used whenever actors like a farmer, policy-maker, or citizen articulate their interests and ideas about animals. At the same time, the actors’ interests as well as the changing context of discussion influence the way they frame a situation. In communicative action regarding animal issues, frames are continually produced and reproduced. Furthermore, although perhaps everyone uses preferred frames, other context may invoke—in the same person—a use of language and concepts belonging to one of the other frames. In this study, we explicitly do not embrace an *a priori* relation between a particular frame and a particular individual or social group. Like Layder (1997) commented with regard to social representations of meaning, they have an “existence above and beyond the consciousness and intentionalities of people.”

Four Frameworks of Animal Value

The analysis of the value lab discussion material produced four distinctive value frameworks, comprising both a descriptive sense (a vision on what the animal is) and a normative sense (a vision on why animals are important and how humans should treat animals). The frameworks were named after their central value concept: “Use,” “Relation,” “Balance,” and “Source.” The next paragraph will discuss the different frameworks in detail. First, we will focus on the system of value categories that were

inductively developed from the discursive materials produced by the value lab sessions. Each of the frameworks contains a specific set of interrelated moral value categories. Together, these categories represent the diversity of values observed in the reflection on animals in the Netherlands. Table 1 shows the list of value categories. Also their definitions are inductively developed from the value lab discussions.

The value categories relate to elements of the animal itself or the human- animal relationship and each contain a subset of values. Broadly, these “values” are defined as those features of the animal or the human- animal relationship that our participants cared about that mattered to them. In each of the four frameworks we have reconstructed all 10 major value categories are recognized. The frameworks however, differ significantly with respect to the relative weight they attribute to these categories. This is visualized in Fig. 1.

Each of the frameworks consists of a differentiated structure of animal values. Like Douglas (1986) noted, the same “object,” in this case the animal and its relationships to humans and the surrounding world, is defined in a different way, using different concepts. In this sense, the frameworks each provide a specific perspective on the animal. The USE framework primarily approaches the animal as a member of its species, whereas the RELATION framework recognizes the individual animal. The BALANCE framework emphasizes the animal’s role in living (eco)systems, while the SOURCE framework defines the animal as a manifestation of the greater whole. This perspective on the animal has its consequences for the direction of the human- animal relationship. The USE framework is characterized by an “I-it” perspective. The animal is objectified, looked at from a distance. The meaning of the animal is colored by the interests of the human agent or by a greater human cause or concern. The RELATION

Table 1 Value categories that constitute the different value frameworks

Value category	Definition
Capacity	Elements of an animal’s biological structure or function
Individuality	Distinctive kind of character and behavior that make the animal a unique organism
Use	Human use of animals, at the expense of the animal
Functionality	Human use of animals, while the animal itself either derives a benefit too or is not significantly harmed.
Being	Way the animal is in-the-world and relates itself to its environment.
Life	Continued existence of the animal on earth, in interaction with other forms of life and the environment.
Experience	Human mental state evoked by the perception of, or the interaction with, animals.
Bond	Personal connectedness or dependence when humans and animals live together.
Naturalness	Background of a system able to develop itself into what it is without human interference.
Spirituality	Reference to a supernatural force in the lives of animals and their relationships with animals.
System	Whole of which the parts show interconnectedness and interdependence to such a degree that they can not be perceived separately anymore.

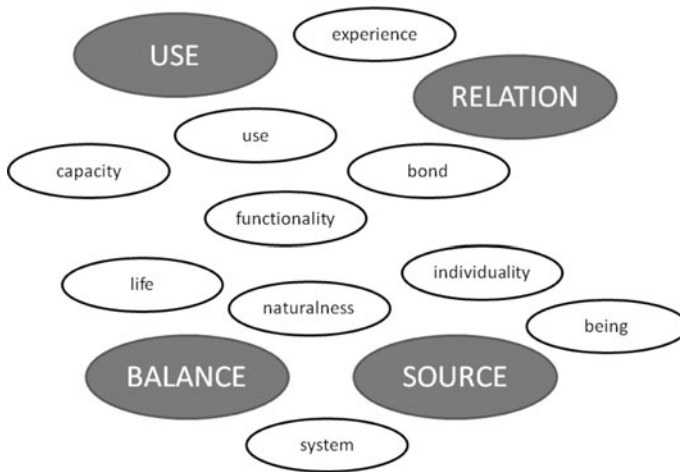


Fig. 1 The four frameworks (*grey*) and the 10 main value categories. All value categories are recognized in every framework. The relative importance of a value category in a particular framework is illustrated by the distance between the value category and that framework. “Naturalness,” for example, plays a role in the *USE* and *RELATION* frameworks, but is more profoundly present in the *BALANCE* and *SOURCE* frameworks

framework recognizes the animal itself as an individual component of the bond between humans and animals, resulting in an “I-you” perspective. It is an asymmetrical relationship, however, in which the hierarchy is set. The *BALANCE* framework on the other hand emphasizes that humans and animals are part of the same system of life. Seeking a balance between human and animal needs, the individual is perceived as less important than the common interest in the system, resulting in an “I-WE” perspective. The *SOURCE* frame too holds a holistic perspective, the “I-THOU” perspective. However, the individual animal is also important here. According to the *SOURCE* frame, the supremacy of the greater whole is manifested not only at the level of the whole itself, but in every individual animal. Table 2 shows the different ways in which the animal and the human-animal relationship are defined. The next paragraphs will explain the four frameworks in detail.

Use: The Animal Objectified

The *USE* framework is characterized by two distinctive features. It is human-centered and the animal is objectified to the level of its species, resulting in the I-it perspective. Also in a single animal, not the individual but the general is what is perceived and appreciated. Certain qualities of the animal offer the opportunity to use the animal for human benefit. A dog’s build makes it a good guard. The most salient is the use of animals for the production of food and other consumption goods like clothing. This use of animals as a resource for human needs is accepted as a natural and necessary phenomenon.

Table 2 Four different framings of animal meaning

Frame	Use	Relation	Balance	Source
Direction	I-it	I-you	I-WE	I- THOU
Animal	relation experience	relation experience functionality individuality		individuality being
Species	capacity use		functionality	
Ecosystem			life naturalness	
Whole			system	naturalness system

The fact that people use animals is an element of biology. Both are part of the biological food chain.

Next to a natural resource, the animal is also perceived as a valuable source of knowledge. The USE framework recognizes the benefits of using animals for scientific experiments and product-testing in, for example, the pharmaceutical industry. Although the use of animals for human benefits is seen as important, this does not mean that humans can do anything they like with animals. They have to treat animals in a responsible way, paying attention to their health and welfare. However, the health and welfare of the animal and human benefits often go hand in hand:

Production animals are living beings. Therefore you should take care of them. If you do that, you will get something in return. They are your livelihood.

Here, the value of “animal welfare is primarily rooted in its ability to satisfy the productive needs of human beings. This is a recurring phenomenon in the USE framework. Values that refer to features of the animal itself, or its natural environment, are primarily appreciated for their instrumentality in the fulfillment of human needs. Another example is provided by the frequent reference to the biological capacities of animals, both with respect to structure and function.

The ingenious complexity of animals makes them interesting as an object of study.

The USE framework greatly appreciates the animal’s internal complexity. Examples the sometimes exceptional perceptual and cognitive capacities. Simultaneously, these capacities form a starting point of scientific research and food production.

The USE framework constructs the nature of the animal in terms of its biological structure and its function in a human-centered environment. The animal is not perceived as an individual being, but as “an animal,” a member of a species. This

conveys the technical-instrumental rationality that is characteristic of the USE framework.

Relation: The Animal Personalized

The bond between humans and animals is at the heart of the RELATION framework. The animal is defined in relation to a human being. Although animals and humans live together, the hierarchy is set. The asymmetrical relationship is primarily conceived as functional to the satisfaction of human needs, which results in the I-you perspective.

Nature and character of the animal can be employed for all kinds of purpose.

It is important to note that this type of use is different from the type most frequently referred to in the Use framework. In the RELATION framing, humans do benefit from the use of animals, but either not at the cost of or beneficial to the animal itself. Therefore we labeled this kind of use as “functionality.” An example of functionality is the support an animal companion grants its owner. One of the group discussion participants expressed it as follows:

The contact with animals has a positive influence on both the physical and mental health of people.

The functionality of the animal refers to a type of use that relates to the perception of the animal as an individual being. In the RELATION framework the animal is personalized, appreciated for its individual qualities and contributions to the relationship. This is another typical difference with the USE framework, in which animals are approached as members of a species. The RELATION framework treats every animal as an individual character. Its features, be it that they are often appreciated for their functionality, are perceived to constitute the individuality of the animal.

Every animal has its own character, built up from a diversity of traits. This is something you can take pleasure in.

Note that this quote not only refers to individuality but also to the value category of “experience.” This category, one of the main categories of the RELATION framework, is defined as the human mental state evoked by the perception of, or the interaction with, animals. It contains concepts like the animal’s beauty, adorability but also creepiness. Also the caressability of the animal, a notion frequently encountered in debates about animal issues, belongs to this category.

Finally, one of the most important elements of the RELATION framework is the personal bond between humans and animals.

You can really develop a personal connection with an animal.

When humans and animals live together, a deeper connection can develop in which both human and animal become involved.

It is hard to maintain a distant relationship with an animal. You will get emotionally involved.

Balance: The Animal Naturalized

The value categories “system” and “life” are two of the most important categories of the BALANCE framework. Often in the group discussions, values were expressed that refer to both categories at the same time, for example the “interconnectedness of life.” Central to the BALANCE framework is the I-WE perspective, based on the observation that animals and humans are part of the same system of life.

All life on earth is interconnected in an indissoluble way.

The value of the greater whole is appreciated. The interdependence of animals and humans means they cannot exist without each other and the system as a whole. It is important to note, however, that the BALANCE framework approached the system of life in a naturalistic sense. It refers to biological (eco-)systems in which every inhabitant has its own functions and needs.

An animal acquires its own place in the ecosystem; it plays a functional role in the maintenance of that system.

The BALANCE framework recognizes the fact that animals are alive. It not only refers to basal biological phenomena as breathing, feeding, and reproduction, but also to the animal’s conscious awareness of its environment and of what happens to them; to the animal’s capacity for feeling. Animal consciousness does not mean they foresee the consequences of their actions. Rather, they live in the here and now and react instinctively. Unlike humans, they act spontaneously and authentically.

The animal is always genuine in its appearance; it presents itself like it truly is.

A third feature of the animal that is particularly valued is the naturalness of the animal. In contrast to the USE and RELATION frameworks, the animal is not defined in relation to human ends, but as the product of an evolutionary development in interaction with its environment.

An animal exists in the interaction with its natural environment by showing its natural behavior.

According to the BALANCE framework the animal’s reason for existence is the animal itself, not the fulfillment of human ends. As a consequence, the optimal life environment for an animal would be a natural environment. Here the animal can behave in a natural way.

Also the USE and RELATION frameworks have a descriptive and a normative sense. In the case of the BALANCE framework, however, the normativity becomes more explicit.

We should leave animals alone. In that way, they can live their own life and behave in their own natural way.

Recognizing that an animal has a natural way of living has the normative implication that we should adjust our own behavior in order to enable animals to live their own natural lives. Both humans and animals are perceived to be inhabitants of this planet. The existence of the one cannot be with the existence of the other. In the BALANCE framing, this situation implies that both humans and animals should give and take.

Source: The Animal Mystified

In the SOURCE framework, both the individuality of every single animal and its interconnectedness with the whole of existence play a very important role. It is impossible to separate them because both features spring from the “source” of existence. Individuality and interconnectedness in the SOURCE framework refer to some kind of universal order and are perceived as essential traits of the animal’s identity.

Animals have a personal character and an identity of their own. Their behavior follows what lives inside them.

Note the difference with the RELATION framing in which the animal’s identity is personalized. In the SOURCE framing it is mystified. The animal’s nature and character provide it with a unique identity, which is seen as fundamental to the animal’s being in the world.

Animals express themselves in the way they want to, the way that fits them. It is characteristic for them to take this freedom.

The SOURCE framework values the animal’s own way of expressing itself as a kind of fundamental beauty, present in all animals.

An animal is naive; it lives like a child, without negative thoughts or feelings of guilt.

Also the naturalness of the animal is valued in the SOURCE framework. More than is the case in the perspective of the BALANCE framework, the naturalness of the animal contributes to its individuality.

Animals are able to live a life in contact with the earth and with nature. They develop a kind of behavior characteristic for their species.

Living together in a natural group—especially parents and children- is essential for life and development of an animal. It grants the animal its identity.

The value category “system” is deeply appreciated in the SOURCE framework. This is another element of the framework in which it is comparable to the BALANCE framework. However, there is a difference. Although both frameworks share a holistic perspective, the holism of the BALANCE framework is more rational, whereas the holism of the SOURCE framework is more spiritual. The BALANCE framework talks about the functional role of every organism in the system of life. The SOURCE framework talks about the necessary interconnectedness of everything that

exists. In the SOURCE framing, the greater whole is perceived as incomprehensible to the human mind. This insight demands respect and reticence. Breaking the essential bond between humans, animals, and the earth will eventually strike back.

An animal is an essential part of a complex, interwoven ecosystem.

Both humans and animals are essential parts of a greater, interconnected whole. Affecting any animal will eventually lead to disintegration of the whole.

Also the naturalness of the animal is established by its connectedness to the greater whole. In the perspective of the Source framework, the animal is seen as a manifestation of the wonder of existence. Humans can only humbly participate.

In the reasoning of the Source framework, whenever we use animals, respect for the animal's individuality and its interconnectedness with all of existence should be the guiding principle.

There is a strong sense that in the current situation humans deprive animals of their space to live. Whereas in fact, the animal's freedom to live its own life should be preserved.

Animals have to be able to be whatever they want to, regardless of the acts of others.

Many animals in this country live in captivity. Whereas actually, they should be able to live their lives in freedom.

According to the Source framework, the animal's own needs should be taken into account in every way that we as humans make use of animals.

Humans should not neglect the needs of animals. This is humiliating to them.

The normative sense of the Source framework is largely present in many of the values that are appreciated. Appreciation of the animal's freedom for example immediately restricts the acceptable actions of humans.

Animal Ethics in the Face of Pluralism

In the beginning of this paper we discussed a tendency towards ethical monism: the desire for a single and comprehensive animal ethic that will guide all our actions regarding animals and the human- animal relationship. Our pragmatist critique of this tendency explored its problematic aspects and offered an alternative, pluralistic conception of the value of animals. The four value frameworks that we have reconstructed through the value lab sessions render a rich understanding of the range of animal values present in the reflection on animals in the Netherlands. Each of the reconstructed frameworks produces specific and contextual meanings of the value of animal, providing a strong validation of value pluralism in the reflection on animal issues in the Netherlands. In this section, the consequences of the observed value pluralism for animal ethics will be discussed.

Recognizing Value Pluralism

Smith (2003) indicated that value pluralism, as it is commonly understood in contemporary philosophy, rests on two ideas: the incompatibility of values and the incommensurability of values (Nagel 1979; Williams 1981). The incompatibility of values occurs when two (or more) possible ideals cannot be fulfilled at the same time. Smith refers to it as the human condition. Conflicts between incompatible values are numerous present in our moral experience, also with regard to animal issues. Such conflicts may occur not only between persons, but also within a single person. We indeed observed participants of the value lab sessions simultaneously appreciating different values of the animal that are difficult to reconcile and that pull them in contradictory directions. Ethical monism, proposed to expel this uncertainty and settle conflicts, needlessly limits the broad range of interactions between humans and animals and thereby misrepresents the diversity of moral experiences and values. Furthermore, seeing that others share the same conflicts of values, be it that they arrive at a different judgment, might improve mutual understanding.

The second element of value pluralism, the incommensurability of values, turns directly to ethical monism. Incommensurability refers to the absence of an overarching value against which competing values can be weighed and evaluated (Smith 2003). It occurs when communication across theories, vocabularies, or perspectives is disturbed and rational assessment difficult or impossible (Furrow, 1995). Smith indicates that also Williams (1981) has argued that the incommensurability of values entails that not every conflict of values can be rationally resolved. He goes on to say that this does not yet imply a commitment to a radical incomparability of values. It means that conflicting values can not necessarily be reduced to each other or to an external standard. If we look at the different framings of the value of animals reconstructed in this study, the incommensurability of those framings is apparent. What universal standard could justify a choice between the I-it perspective of the USE framework and the I-you perspective of the RELATION framework? Both of these frameworks will produce a different judgment of, say, the use of animals for laboratory experiments. In both frameworks, knowledge benefits, health benefits, animal suffering, or the intrusion of animal lives acquires a different weight and the situation will be judged by appealing to different criteria. Both frameworks exhibit their own internal rationality.

Beyond the Dichotomy of Value Conflicts

Another problematic aspect of traditional animal ethics is that value conflicts regarding the human treatment of animals are often conceptualized as a conflict between values that represent the needs, interests, or rights of humans and values represent the needs, interests, or rights of animals. The dichotomous framing construes participants in the moral debate as adversaries on either side of a dilemma. The value pluralism observed in this study demonstrates that this dichotomy oversimplifies our response to the morally problematic dimensions of the situation we are confronted with. First of all, it is important to note that within

each of the reconstructed frameworks, a mixture of values is expressed (see Fig. 1). Furthermore, the role of a certain value in moral judgment will eventually be determined by the meaning that value acquires in its contextual relation to other values. The concept of naturalness, for example, is acknowledged by all four frameworks as an important aspect of the animal's life. The frameworks, however, differ in the contextual meaning of that concept for the human-animal relationship. In the USE framework, the value category "naturalness" is related to the categories of "functionality" and "use," constructing "naturalness" as a necessary condition for the fulfillment of human needs. In the BALANCE framework the naturalness of the animal is primarily related to the value category of "life" and "system" perceived as a necessary condition for a good life of the animal itself, whereas the RELATION framework emphasizes the human experience of an animal's naturalness. The SOURCE framework recognizes a final purpose in the animal's naturalness, as it is connected to the categories of "spirituality" and "being." As a result, all four frameworks differ in the normative implications that are attributed to the concept of naturalness, some are instrumental towards the fulfillment of human needs, others are not. Ultimately, the way in which a certain concept is guiding moral inquiry depends on the configuration of the entire framework it is positioned in. As a result of the dichotomous framing of moral debates about the treatment of animals, different moral positions become fixed positions and the associated values perceived and treated as ends-in-themselves. The different interpretations of "naturalness" indicate, however, that a value concept can play a meaningful part in different framings of the value of animals.

Frame Reflection

In his examination of value pluralism in environmental ethics, Smith (2003) concludes that "value conflicts and dilemmas are not pathological." They are an integral part of the moral life of both individuals and groups. The question remains how moral judgments should be made in the context of value pluralism. Dewey's reconstruction of ethics views moral life as an explicit process of cooperative conflict resolution. In the context of relationships between humans and animals, most public conflicts involve multiple stakeholders, each of them framing the value of animals, and therefore, the moral problem at hand, in a different way. The value frameworks reconstructed in this study exemplify these different ways of framing. They imply entrenched disagreements about values, interests, and ideals. To understand how cooperative conflict resolution can be practiced in the context of those deeply entrenched public conflicts, we return to the concept of framing as put forward in the work of another pragmatist, Donald Schön. The discursive materials of the value lab demonstrate that the plurality of perspectives present in the reflection on animals in the Netherlands results in various "problem-setting stories," in which people convey what is wrong and right. These problem-setting stories are grounded in different, in some ways conflicting, frames. According to Schön, these different, conflicting frames are the reason that such public conflicts seem intractable controversies (Schön 1979). He argues that those kind of problems are

in need of *frame restructuring*: the process by which we “respond to frame conflict by constructing a new problem-setting story, one in which we attempt to integrate conflicting frames by including features and relations drawn from earlier stories” (Schön 1979, p. 270). A crucial condition for frame restructuring is *frame reflection*, achieving understanding of one’s own framing of a problem and (possible) differences with the framings of others. The concept of frame reflection revives the Deweyan theme of the creative and constructive resolution of conflicts in public life. According to Keulartz et al. (2002) this reflexive attitude is precisely what is needed to sustain a pragmatist ideal of equal coexistence of plural perspectives. They argue that “conflicting parties have to appreciate the facts that they are competing for primacy within the same universe of discourse with others that cannot beforehand be branded as unreasonable. Such reflexive awareness rejects the naivety of dogmatic beliefs, recognizes its own fallibility and leaves room for ‘reasonable dissensus’.”

Inquiry and Deliberation in Animal Ethics

Reflexive awareness is of course a naturally occurring phenomenon of public life. However, in the light of cooperative resolution of value conflicts in animal ethics, reflexive awareness has to be explicitly facilitated. It requires a deliberative attitude. Like Dewey advocated, it requires the critical appraisal of the values and beliefs of oneself and others. Minter (2001) noted that Dewey’s philosophical project demonstrates a strong faith in the ability of human experience to produce from within itself the justification of values and beliefs. Moral deliberation in this view ultimately rests on the potential of individuals to collectively engage in the creative-intelligent activity of moral inquiry. It is the role of animal ethics to facilitate this collective engagement in a process of moral inquiry and open democratic deliberation. Also Beekman and Brom (2007) have argued that in pluralist democracies it is important to design ethics as a platform for value debates. This approach to animal ethics requires the development of experimental methods and instruments for frame-reflective inquiry and public deliberation. The *value lab* tool, applied in this study, can be understood as such a deliberative instrument. The value frameworks produced in the value labs can be used as heuristic tools for understanding the philosophical relationships between different ethical positions in the animal ethics debates. They serve as contextual means of inquiry, providing structuring insight into the morally problematic dimensions of the pluralistic social context in which the human treatment of animals takes place. As such, these frameworks can be used to arrange, structure, and facilitate new deliberations on animal issues.

Acknowledgments We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of a previous version of this paper for their helpful comments.

Open Access This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial License which permits any noncommercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and source are credited.

References

- Aaltola, E. (2005). Animal ethics and interest conflicts. *Ethics and The Environment*, 10(1), 19–48.
- Armstrong, S. J., & Botzler, R. G. (2003). *The animal ethics reader*. London: Routledge.
- Baarda, D. B., de Goede, M. P. M., & Teunissen, J. (2005). *Basisboek kwalitatief onderzoek: Praktische handleiding voor het opzetten en uitvoeren van kwalitatief onderzoek*. Groningen: Stenfert Kroese.
- Barbour, R. S., & Kitzinger, J. (1999). *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory and practice*. London: Sage.
- Beekman, V., & Brom, F. W. A. (2007). Ethical tools to support systematic public deliberations about the ethical aspects of agricultural biotechnologies. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 20, 3–12.
- Burningham, K. (1995). Attitudes, accounts and impact assessment. *Sociological Review*, 43(1), 100–122.
- Dewey, J. (1920). *Reconstruction in philosophy*. New York: H. Holt and Company.
- Dewey, J., & Tufts, J. H. (1932). *Ethics* (Rev ed.). New York: H. Holt and company.
- Douglas, M. (1986). *How institutions think*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press.
- Fisher, K. (1997). Locating frames in the discursive universe. *Sociological Research Online*, 2(3), U40–U62.
- Furrow, D. (1995). *Against theory*. London: Routledge.
- Garner, R. (2005). *Animal ethics*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Holland, A. (1995). Artificial lives: philosophical dimensions of farm animal biotechnology. In T. B. Mepham, G. A. Tucker, & J. Wiseman (Eds.), *Issues in agricultural bioethics* (pp. 293–305). Nottingham: Nottingham University Press.
- Keulartz, J., Korthals, M., Schermer, M., & Swierstra, T. (2002). *Pragmatist ethics for a technological culture*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Keulartz, J., Korthals, M., Schermer, M., & Swierstra, T. (2003). *Pragmatist ethics for a technological culture*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Kupper, F., Krijgsman, L., Bout, H., & De Cock Buning, Tj. (2007). The value lab: Exploring moral frameworks in the deliberation of values in the biotechnology debate. *Science and Public Policy*, 34(9), 657–670.
- Layder, D. (1997). *Modern social theory: key debates and new directions*. London: UCL Press.
- Light, A., & Katz, E. (1996). *Environmental pragmatism*. London: Routledge.
- Light, A., & McKenna, E. (2004). *Animal pragmatism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Madriz, E. (2000). Focus groups in feminist research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. xx, 1065, [1057])*. Thousand Oaks, Calif; London: Sage.
- Minteer, B. A. (2001). Intrinsic value for pragmatists? *Environmental Ethics*, 23(1), 57–75.
- Minteer, B. A. (2004). Beyond considerability: A Deweyan view of the animal rights/environmental ethics debate. In A. Light & E. McKenna (Eds.), *Animal pragmatism (pp 97–118)*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Minteer, B. A., & Manning, R. E. (1999). Pragmatism in environmental ethics: Democracy, pluralism, and the management of nature. *Environmental Ethics*, 21(2), 191–207.
- Minteer, B. A., Corley, E. A., & Manning, R. E. (2004). Environmental ethics beyond principle? The case for a pragmatic contextualism. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 17(2), 131–156.
- Musschenga, A. W. (1992). Universal morality and moral tradition. In B. Voorzanger, A. Soeteman, & A. W. Musschenga (Eds.), *Morality, worldview, and law (pp. 338)*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Nagel, T. (1979). *Mortal questions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Regan, T. (1986). The case for animal rights. In P. Singer (Ed.), *In defense of animals* (pp. 13–26). New York: Harper.
- Regan, T. (1988). *The case for animal rights*. London: Routledge.
- Rollin, B. E. (1989). *The unheeded cry: Animal consciousness. animal pain and science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schön, D. A. (1979). Generative metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought: A perspective on problem-setting in social policy* (pp. 254–283). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schön, D. A., & Rein, M. (1994). *Frame reflection: Toward the resolution of intractable policy controversies*. New York: Basic Books.
- Singer, P. (1990). *Animal liberation*. New York Review/Random House.
- Smith, G. (2003). *Deliberative democracy and the environment*. London: Routledge.

- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research : Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks; London: Sage.
- Swaffield, S. (1998). Contextual meanings in policy discourse: A case study of language use concerning resource policy in the New Zealand high country. *Policy Sciences*, 31(3), 199–224.
- Taylor, P. (1986). *Respect for nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Waterton, C., & Wynne, B. (1999). Can focus groups access community views? In R. Barbour & J. E. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Developing focus group research: Politics*. Sage: Theory and Practice.
- Williams, B. (1981). *Moral luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, B. (1996). Truth in ethics. In B. Hooker (Ed.), *Truth in ethics* (pp. xi, 96). Oxford: Blackwell.