Darwin was willing to discern a wide range of emotions in animals: not just those now considered basic in humans – anger, fear, sadness, disgust and enjoyment – but jealousy, pride, shame, ennui, wonder and curiosity. In Part I, chapter iii, of *The Descent of Man* (1871) he writes:

Most of the more complex emotions are common to the higher animals and ourselves. Every one has seen how jealous a dog is of his master’s affection, if lavished on any other creature; and I have observed the same fact with monkeys. This shows that animals not only love, but have desire to be loved. Animals manifestly feel emulation. They love approbation or praise; and a dog carrying a basket for his master exhibits in a high degree self-complacency or pride. There can, I think, be no doubt that a dog feels shame, as distinct from fear, and something very like modesty when begging too often for food. …

Several observers have stated that monkeys certainly dislike being laughed at … Dogs show what may be fairly called a sense of humour, as distinct from mere play; if a bit of stick or other such object be thrown to one, he will often carry it away for a short distance; and then squatting down with it on the ground … will wait until his master comes quite close to take it away. The dog will then seize it and rush away in triumph, repeating the same manoeuvre, and evidently enjoying the practical joke.²

A monkey who disliked being laughed at, and a dog who teased his master for fun, would be displaying both self-awareness and awareness
of another’s perspective, capacities whose ascription to nonhuman animals remains highly controversial today. Darwin’s discussion of animal emotion in the Descent and in The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals (1872) influenced later work on the subject, from George Romanes’s Animal Intelligence (1882) and Mental Evolution in Animals (1883) onwards; but it was strongly criticised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for, among other things, its reliance on anecdote and its anthropomorphism. Darwin ‘was convinced and tried to convince his readers that emotions and their expressions were not unique to humans’.

This question was significant for Darwin because similarities between human and animal emotional expression suggested continuity between species, so offering extra support to his evolutionary theory. He ended Expression with the cautiously-worded claim that ‘the study of the theory of expression confirms to a certain limited extent the conclusion that man is derived from some lower animal form’. That evolutionary conclusion itself has been widely seen as justifying a fundamental re-evaluation of human relations with other animal species. Ousting humanity from its position within Christian tradition as the special creature made in God’s image, evolutionary theory places human animals on a continuum with all the others to which they are related. J. Howard Moore, an early-twentieth-century Darwinist and teacher of zoology, used the idea of evolutionary continuity to argue for ‘the kinship of all the inhabitants of the planet Earth. . . . they are all related, physically, mentally, morally’. In the late twentieth century James Rachels argued that Darwinism undermined the basis of a traditional morality giving special dignity and consideration to humans. He also emphasises kinship, which he describes in terms of shared feelings and expression: ‘Once we see other animals as our kin, we have little choice but to see their condition as analogous to our own. … Darwin stressed that … their nervous systems, their behaviours, their cries, are our nervous systems, our behaviours, our cries, with only a little modification. They are our common property because we inherited them from the same ancestors’.

These claims for the far-reaching ethical consequences of Darwinism have recently been challenged by Rod Preece in a history of the status of animals in human thought. He argues that the basis for the ethical consideration of animals had already existed within the