
In a challenging and sometimes passionate book, Lisa Kemmerer examines the weaknesses (and strengths) of four major theories of what she calls "protectionism" (protecting either nonhuman animals or all living things) and then introduces her own theory, based on her Minimize Harm Maxim (which, unlike Kemmerer, I will shorten to MHM). For good measure, she includes an extensive account of the extent to which four great world religions encourage protectionism and examines how, supposedly, the MHM deals with five areas of human-nonhuman animal involvement: zoos and circuses, clothing, food, science, and companion animals. Kemmerer, never less than thorough, begins with 49 pages of "Methods and Terms." Despite this explicit attention to the principles of philosophical discussion, Kemmerer is sometimes far from consistent and—despite her emphasis on the importance of impartiality—is not always impartial.

**Examination of Theories**

The strongest part of the book is the examination of the theories of Tom Regan, Peter Singer, Paul Taylor, and (with rather less sureness) the theologian Andrew Linzey. Regan's argument that mammals, at least, have inherent value and rights equal to those of humans is not quite absolute enough for Kemmerer, who thinks Regan inconsistent in still giving preference to humans over dogs in the theoretical sinking lifeboat where someone must be jettisoned to save the others. Mill is unjustified, by contrast with Plutarch, in favoring life as a human to that as a pig. Her discussion here is interesting, not least for the evidence and arguments she provides for why some animal behavior should itself be regarded as moral—and more so than that of some humans.

There is much of interest too in Kemmerer's account of Singer. Although Singer's position, as a preference utilitarian, contrasts with Regan's—and Kemmerer spells out the differences carefully—some similar problems arise for both. These include the epistemological one of how we judge animals' sentience and whether we should not also owe moral respect to living but insentient beings. Kemmerer's doubts over Singer's counter-intuitive replaceability argument (painless killing is acceptable provided another similar animal comes into the world to restore the total amount of happiness) seem to me well founded.

Taylor differs from Regan and Singer in his concern for the whole environment—not just animals—but he is unusual as an environmentalist in his concern for individuals rather than populations. Kemmerer shares Taylor's respect for all individual living things, though her long discussion exposes many inconsistencies in his theory. She uses her personal travel experience to good effect when she argues, against Taylor, that there is often little reason to grant primitive communities a right to traditional hunting methods. And she has much of interest to say on Taylor's peculiar emphasis on teleology as the reason for an organism's value and on why domesticated animals should be included in his system. It would (in my view) remove many of the inconsistencies in Taylor's system if he recognized the need for a scale of value in our concern for the living world, but this is abhorrent to him—as it is to Kemmerer.
Religion and Medicine

Kemmerer also discusses with similar thoroughness the work of Andrew Linzey, though she seriously misreads him in thinking him a creationist. Anglican theologians such as Linzey have long ago accepted Darwin's theory (after all the great man was buried in Westminster Abbey), and Linzey, in an early book (1976), gives many indications that he is no Bible literalist. He mentions for example that human brain capacity has probably not changed in 100,000 years and quotes words of Hans Hass about evolution occurring through 3 billion years. If Kemmerer's view of Linzey were correct, his status as a serious thinker would collapse on that ground alone. I suspect that his view on God's granting to humans domination over animals is more sophisticated than Kemmerer supposes. Unlike Kemmerer, I also applaud Linzey for condemning illegal or dangerous activism.

It is good to know that Christianity in Linzey's expert judgment adjures Christians toward a concern for animals, just as do many of the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Islam, as Kemmerer outlines for us in considerable (at times perhaps excessive) detail and often in a lively manner.

And then after this excursion into religion, Kemmerer brings us up sharp with an account of six tragic medical cases, in each of which the patient should probably be allowed, or even assisted, to die. In the most extreme case, that of the anencephalic Baby Theresa, she is hardly alive anyway—she has no cerebrum and no possibility of consciousness. In certain others, the patient is suffering without hope of recovery and wishes to be allowed to die. In all the cases but a British one (where permission for death was granted by a court), the law required life to be supported as long as medically possible. In the case of Baby Theresa especially, this legal position appears to me absurd, but unexpectedly (to me) Kemmerer draws a very different conclusion from the six cases. She argues that the legal position—that human life must be maintained at all costs in all circumstances—represents "Western moral thought" and is at fault in only one respect, that we do not adopt a similar attitude to every individual of every species. Kemmerer fixes on Spinoza's term of "conatus," or striving to remain alive, as the one characteristic that is found in every kind of living thing, including the wholly unconscious Baby Theresa. On this basis, Kemmerer then introduces her MHM. She is apparently adjuring us to minimize harm to everything living (every plant, mold, and bacterium as well as every animal), though sometimes she seems to be applying the MHM only to every animal.

As a general attitude to all living things, I applaud the MHM and even follow it. We should not destroy any organism pointlessly or for amusement, and I personally rescue spiders from baths and remove wasps without injuring them. But it is surely absurd to apply the MHM, as Kemmerer does, without any scale of value. I would disapprove of someone's killing a spider, but I would regard this act as a lot less immoral than killing a dog and vastly less immoral than killing a human being. For Kemmerer, to kill any living thing—human or spider or plant—is not only wrong but equally wrong. So no weeding, despite what Voltaire said about cultivating one's garden! In discussing a theoretical lifeboat situation of her own, Kemmerer not only grants a mole rat, elephant shrew, hyrax, and bush baby exactly as much claim as a human against being ditched to save the others but even grants a daisy an equal claim.

Bacteria hardly require Kemmerer's MHM, for they are top organisms anyway (at least in the view of the late Stephen Jay Gould) and we are often in their power. In one