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## Book Review

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Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce, *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 188 pp., \$26.00 (cloth), ISBN: 0-226-04161-1.

In *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals*, Marc Bekoff (ethology) and Jessica Pierce (religious studies and bioethics) argue that certain non-human animals display a broad array of prosocial behaviors (voluntary behaviors intended to benefit others), including fairness, empathy, and trust, that should be described as 'moral'. More controversially, they argue that such prosocial animal behaviors can constitute a 'wild justice' that deserves both attention and appreciation by humans. This is a fascinating work that deserves wide engagement by scholars in the field of religion and nature. Bekoff and Pierce's (henceforth 'B/P') scholarship questions deeply held religious ideas of human ethical exceptionalism and philosophical dualism, and, by doing so, expands our understanding of the natural foundations of justice and ethics.

The authors define wild justice as a 'suite' of moral behaviors exhibited by animals clustered behaviors related to cooperation, empathy, and justice (fairness). In Chapter 1, 'Morality in Animal Societies', B/P define morality as 'a suite of interrelated other-regarding behaviors that cultivate and regulate complex interactions within social groups' (p. 7). Thus, they argue that primates, social carnivores, cetaceans, elephants, and some rodents demonstrate a broad array of moral (and immoral) behaviors (p. 9). Moreover, the authors assert that not all prosocial animal behaviors should be regarded as 'moral' (pp. 10-11). Instead, B/P set threshold requirements for species to be described as 'moral,' including: sufficient social organization and complexity; neural complexity that might serve as a foundation for moral emotions; highly developed cognitive capacities (e.g., memory); and sufficient levels of behavioral flexibility (p. 13).

Chapter 2, 'Foundations for Wild Justice', surveys the complex interdisciplinary landscape surrounding these issues (including forays into cognitive ethology, social neuroscience, and philosophical ethics) (pp. 25-33). The authors attend briefly to methodological issues, including how humans can describe animal behavior accurately, anthropomorphism, and the problem of describing animal minds (pp. 34-44). B/P offer suggestions about the 'social intelligence hypothesis'—the notion that larger brains evolve to address complex social surroundings—and how this might relate to intelligence, emotion, sociality, and the adaptive mechanisms of socially complex behaviors in animals (pp. 50-53).

B/P provide a useful overview of altruism, selfishness, spite, cooperation, reciprocity, and empathy in Chapters 3, 'Cooperation', and 4, 'Empathy'. This includes explorations of competition, tit-for-tat behavior, the division of rewards, generalized reciprocity, game theory, and the evolution of cooperation. They provide a brief overview of ultimate explanations (kin selection, mutualism, and reciprocal altruism) and proximate explanations (moral emotions, affiliation, and neurological components) as

explanations for cooperative behavior (pp. 67-78). Finally, B/P ask the seminal question: 'So when is cooperation really "moral" behavior' (p. 82)? They caution here against a dualistic speciesism predicated on 'higher' and 'lower' forms of animal intelligence. Their conclusion is simple: some animal species are capable of a range of remarkable complex cooperative behaviors that move beyond simple forms of mutualism or kin-selected altruism (pp. 83-84). This dovetails nicely into discussions of empathy as an adaptive mechanism that allows animals to 'feel with' other animals (pp. 88-94). Empathy is defined here as not only individualized animal behavior but also as a fundamental component of some animal societies (e.g., elephants). Again, B/P maintain that such adaptive behaviors are a key element of morality itself (pp. 102-109).

In Chapter 5, 'Justice', the authors address difficult questions regarding prosocial animal performance of 'justice'. First, they demonstrate that many animal species display adaptive traits involving a cluster of expectations, including forms of fairness, equity, reciprocal sharing, retribution, indignation, forgiveness, pleasure, gratitude, and trust (p. 113). Their contention that such traits are best described as 'wild justice', however, will elicit skepticism. Indeed, B/P realize that such definitions of justice are controversial: 'Justice as expressed in human societies is arguably more complex and more nuanced than in other animal societies. But this is no way suggests that animals cannot and do not also have a sense of fairness' (p. 132). Fairness through 'fair play' develops highly complex forms of trust moving beyond self-interest and towards complex forms of social engagement (pp. 115-27 and 129-31). B/P then downplay notions of impartiality here as critical to defining justice (pp. 131-33).

The final chapter, 'Animal Morality and Its Discontents', offers a defense against potential critiques. Again, the main thesis is repeated: 'animal morality is different in degree, not in kind, from human morality' (p. 139). They conclude that exceptional human capacities are like the 'outer layers of the Russian doll, relatively late evolutionary additions to the suite of moral behaviors. Although each of these capacities may make human morality unique, they are all grounded in a much deeper, broader, and evolutionarily more ancient layer of moral behaviors that we share with other animals' (p. 141). B/P assert that criticisms of their project (including objections that animals are not smart enough, lack moral emotions, lack empathy, and lack rationality) are scientifically incorrect. Moreover, they survey criticisms that animals lack reflective judgment, moral agency, and a conscience. B/P acknowledge that animals and humans differ in terms of 'reflective judgment', but contend that 'reflective judgment is not a precondition for moral behavior' (p. 142). Indeed, animals may display reflective judgment and thus moral agency as appropriate to their own species (pp. 143-44). Finally, B/P argue forcefully that scientifically accurate descriptions of animal behavior shape human perceptions regarding animal capabilities (p. 150).

The sheer scope and interdisciplinary nature of their work should significantly shape the religion and nature conversation on both animal behavior as 'moral' as well as the normative question about how humans ought to regard animals. The author's account of morality as 'clusters' of prosocial behaviors that have evolved *sui generis* within specific species, for example, should widen the purview of those who account for 'ethics' solely along human notions of religious tradition, rationality, virtue, consequences, etc. Indeed, their work demands the religious ethicists take seriously thinking holistically about the animals that inhabit specific landscapes.

There are many problems with this work, including that their conclusions regarding animals as possessing a 'conscience' are circumspect given the insufficiency of data (pp. 145-47). In addition, the authors provide hasty and sometimes dismissive treatments of difficult philosophical and ethical problems such as anthropomorphism (p. 40), the problem of other minds (p. 44), the nature and content of human conceptions of justice (pp. 131-33), the naturalistic fallacy (p. 137), and moral agency and conscience (pp. 143-44). Moreover, the authors do not examine how humans themselves offer *sui generis* accounts of justice and morality. Although it is not their aim to provide a full taxonomy of human language, self-reflection, and self-consciousness, further discussion here is needed given their claims of 'wild justice' in other species. Indeed, given B/P's own argument that moral systems emerge *sui generis* within particular species, it seems uncontroversial to argue that the justice of humans—with its insistence on fairness, impartiality, evidence, etc.—is likely incommensurable with 'elephant justice' and unique in many respects.

Moreover, B/P use the concept of 'animal morality' in different ways, including: descriptively (as an accurate assessment of how certain animals really act), proscriptively (how humans should describe the lives of prosocial animal species), and normatively (how the prosocial behavior of such animals should impact human dealings with these animals). How they employ this phrase in specific instances is difficult to track. The authors confusingly wish to 'de-moralize' some accounts of animal behavior and to 'moralize' others (pp. 62, 148) and are perhaps too comfortable moving from scientifically descriptive terms (e.g., 'altruism') to more complex terms (e.g., 'justice').

This is a complex and rewarding work that will give its readers an excellent synopsis of this emerging field. B/P's rich and detailed images of other-regarding behaviors in animals greatly expands the religion and nature conversation in that it fuels the human imagination in describing how animals actually live and how human religious traditions ought to regard such animals.

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