

Marc Bekoff, *The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy—and Why They Matter* (Navato, CA: New World Library, 2007), 256 pp., \$23.95 (pbk), ISBN: 978-1-5773-1502-5. Review doi: 10.1558/jsrnc.v4i1.120.

Marc Bekoff's book, *The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Empathy—and Why They Matter*, argues three key points: (a) the growing scientific consensus is that animal emotions exist, (b) the existence of animal emotions is significant for humans, and (c) knowledge of animal emotions should lead to more ethical treatment of animals by humans. The content of the book amasses data and anecdotal evidence to explore the evolutionary significance of animal emotions, which appear as adaptations fostering social bonds and ordering social encounters among animals. The Darwinian assumption of species continuity—inclusive of human continuity with other animals—leads to the expectation that animals other than humans express emotions, empathy, and moral behavior. Such an assumption, supported by appropriate observations of animal sentience, creates 'enormous responsibility and obligation to treat other beings with respect, appreciation, compassion, and love' (p. xxi).

With methodological clarity, Bekoff explains that cognitive ethology is an integrative, comparative approach to the evolutionary and ecological study of animal minds, emotions, and morality. Informed by animal behavior, neurobiology, and evolutionary biology, Bekoff understands *emotions* as 'psychological phenomena that help in behavioral management and control' (p. 6). The methodological framework for studying animal behavior and emotions (derived from Niko Tinbergen) entails interest in how particular behaviors evolved, how they assist animals in adapting to the environment, what causes particular behaviors, and how behaviors arise and develop over the animals' lifespan. Bekoff contends that careful observation and description of animal behavior is best undertaken in the animals' natural environment and with the animals' point of view in mind. With attention to epistemological concerns, Bekoff is candid about divergent scientific approaches, particularly addressing such complex issues as reference to anecdotes in science and appropriate use of anthropomorphism.

Bekoff writes engagingly about animal emotions—joy, humor, wonder, sadness, love, embarrassment, anger, aggression—drawing the reader into numerous anecdotes about a variety of animals. He asserts that animal emotions are quite transparent to anyone attentive to 'changes in muscle tone, posture, gait, facial expression, eye size and gaze, vocalizations, odors (pheromones), singly and together' (p. 45). The evolutionary continuity among humans and other animals suggests that we not only should expect precursors of human emotions in animals, but also that humans should be able to recognize such traits in other species. He properly cautions that observers must respect both similarities and differences in the expression of behavior and emotions. Species and individuals within species are diverse in emotional and behavioral experiences, and humans must respect that 'a dog has rich emotional and cognitive experiences of the *dog kind*' rather than the human kind (p. 15).

Bekoff similarly suggests that morality, like emotions, has precursors in animal behavior. He agrees with Frans de Waal that human morality is expressed on a continuum with animal sociality, but Bekoff distinguishes his view from de Waal's by claiming that some animals might be moral beings. Not to be confused with ethical systems, *morality* is defined by Bekoff as

a wide-ranging suite of social behaviors; it is an internalized set of rules for how to act within a community. Moral behavior includes (but may not be limited to) cooperation, reciprocity, empathy, and helping. Morality has emotional, or affective, components, and it also has cognitive components (pp. 88-89).

Social animals may adhere to or depart from the behavioral conventions of the group, but function within the social context of morality. Species continuity means that animals exhibit evolutionary precursors of human morality, but Bekoff carefully notes that dog morality is not the same as chimpanzee morality, which is not the same as human morality (to paraphrase Bekoff, p. 92). Morality may be adaptive to diverse species because survival depends on cooperation.

Bekoff's book is to be commended for a number of reasons. First, he invites us into the mind and heart of a cognitive ethologist. The reader is privy to the way Bekoff thinks, and the book is both autobiographical and intellectual because of his commendable personal transparency and methodological clarity, as well as his candid discussion of differences with opposing views. Second, the book serves as a critical and accessible review of scientific literature in cognitive ethology, especially in its impressive collection of data and anecdotes illustrating animal emotions and morality. Third, Bekoff explains why understanding animal emotions is important, and he challenges human animals to practice what we know by 'walking through the world treating every living being like an equal—not the same, but as a being with an equal right to life' (p. 164). Finally, while the argument explicitly appeals to specialists in animal and ecological ethics, Bekoff invites theologians, religion scholars, and religious leaders, as well as scientists, 'to rise to the extremely difficult task of understanding animals' emotional and moral lives and figuring out how they compare to—and have played a role in the evolution of—human moral, ethical, and spiritual understandings' (pp. 30-31). Bekoff is aware that consideration of animal morality, in particular, may be perceived as a threat to deeply held beliefs about human uniqueness, but he appeals to participants in religious traditions to accept animal morality alongside human ethical and spiritual understandings.

Nancy R. Howell
Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Religion
Saint Paul School of Theology
howellnr@spst.edu