

Searching for the Animal of Animal Ethics

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Identity and the moral status of animals: Developing an animal ethics through the philosophy of technology

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Abstract (Poster presentation)

Conscientious dialogue and partnership between scientists and ethicists have played a major role in securing advances in improved animal welfare and overall respect for animals' interests. Not only has this partnership helped to shape policy and trade regulations, the marriage of science and values has exposed certain myths about how well (or not) animals fare in the charge of humans. However, while scientific and ethical ponderings of animal sentience, i.e., the capacity for pleasure and pain, have captured our collective musings, ethicists, philosophers, ethologists, sociologists and animal scientists have spent only modest attention reflecting on (and in some cases have taken for granted) the relationship between technology and animal welfare. Of particular interest is the way in which technology has shaped and in some cases distorted animals' identities. As a way to address this oversight, I argue that we should reform the way we understand and treat animals through a reform of our philosophy of technology. I begin by looking at how and the extent to which technology, (understood as technological artifacts and systems) shields us from appreciating their identities and how it influences our myths of animals. Next, I contend that a new philosophy of technology must be located in its full moral and political context. I give an account of these contexts and of what will be required to change them, namely, according an ethic of care a central place in our relationship to technology