

## Philosophy in Review



Aubrey H. Fine, Megan K. Mueller, Zenithson Y. Ng, Alan M. Beck, and Jose M. Peralta (Eds.), 'The Routledge International Handbook of Human-Animal Interactions and Anthrozoology'

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**Aubrey H. Fine, Megan K. Mueller, Zenithson Y. Ng, Alan M. Beck & Jose M. Peralta (Eds.)**  
*The Routledge International Handbook of Human-Animal Interactions and Anthrozoology.*  
Routledge 2024. 808 pp. \$216.00 USD (Hardcover 9781032153322); \$45.46 USD (Paperback 9781032153339).

The historical yet complex relationship between humans and non-human animals, which will be referred to as animals, has recently garnered significant attention from activists, scholars, and the public. The increased attention to this issue is a direct response to the Anthropocene epoch, a geological period marked by the substantial influence of human activities on the entire ecosystem. This impact encompasses a wide range of phenomena, including but not limited to climate change. Human activities have significantly affected the dynamics of human-animal relationships, leading to a notable escalation in conflicts between humans and animals. This has underscored the urgent need to preserve the delicate balance of human-animal relationships and the broader ecosystem by promptly taking corrective measures. To successfully achieve this, it is imperative for humans to exhibit heightened awareness of their actions. This awareness is crucial not only for enjoying the benefits of human-animal interactions but also for ensuring the well-being of animals and, consequently, the overall health of the ecosystem.

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on the intricate and multifaceted relationship between humans and animals within the realm of literature. While existing reference materials cover this topic, this newly published handbook stands out as a comprehensive and up-to-date resource that delves into various dimensions of the human-animal *bond*. It extensively covers a wide array of topics, including animal welfare, the role of assistance animals, zoonoses, and the integration of animals in educational settings. It also provides the readers with an in-depth exploration of the advantages and disadvantages associated with pet ownership. Moreover, the handbook delves into complex ethical considerations surrounding animals, prompting readers to ponder over thought-provoking questions about animal testing and related issues.

The handbook is a thorough and extensive compilation of contributions that delve into various subjects within the realm of animal studies. It encompasses well-known as well as less-known aspects, providing a specialised emphasis on the interactions between humans and animals, and on the emerging discipline of anthrozoology.

Anthrozoology is an interdisciplinary field encompassing ‘... psychology, psychiatry, ethology, anthropology, human medicine, child development, social work, education, occupational therapy, nutrition, kinesiology, gerontology, zoology, animal sciences and veterinary medicine’ (1). Animal welfare and anthrozoology are distinct fields of research with their own focuses. While animal welfare primarily concerns the well-being and treatment of animals, anthrozoology explores the interactions and relationships between humans and animals. Despite both fields of research being related to animals, their areas of study do not overlap (Siddiq & Habib, 2016).

The book delves into the myriad benefits of pet ownership for our physical and mental well-being. It underscores the importance of understanding the responsibilities that come with having a pet, such as long-term commitment, financial stability, and ample love and care. It emphasises the



necessity of providing consistent attention, including regular veterinary check-ups, vaccinations, and physical exercise to alleviate and prevent stress that may impact an animal's overall health. Chapter 19 presents some studies that challenge the assumption that homelessness has a detrimental effect on animal welfare. The studies cited in this chapter reveal that dogs belonging to homeless individuals did not exhibit significantly poorer health compared to those owned by non-homeless individuals. Furthermore, it suggests that dogs owned by homeless individuals engaged in more physical exercise.

The handbook is divided into fifty-one chapters, with the last chapter serving as the epilogue, and can be read in any order. Some topics are mentioned in multiple chapters and are covered in detail in others. These topics include the benefits of having an animal in education and at different life stages (childhood, adolescence, and adulthood), as well as assistance animals for individuals with physical and/or mental disabilities. The first chapter introduces the topic of the human-animal bond and anthrozoology. Subsequent chapters cover various interesting topics, such as the positive mental and physical effects of having a pet and the disadvantages, such as zoonotic diseases, allergies, and joint injuries. There is a dedicated chapter on zoonotic diseases, explaining which diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans and some recommendations for individuals. The topic of assistance and emotional support animals is also interesting, as it may be highly beneficial for those considering taking an assistance dog or an emotional support animal for psychological and physical disabilities, owing to their non-judgmental nature and therapeutic effects. Chapter 12 is equally interesting, focusing on animal sentience and emotions. It raises the challenge of identifying emotions in animals, as they cannot verbally report how they feel. The authors discuss the necessity to objectively measure animal emotions, as well as the implications of animal emotions in human-animal interactions. The chapter explores how animals apprehend to *read* human facial expressions, whether through imitation or social learning and adjust their behaviour accordingly. Animal emotions are expressed differently than human emotions and understanding animal facial and emotional expressions can help humans adopt appropriate behaviour and promote positive interactions.

I reckon that all chapters are highly enjoyable to read and attention-worthy; however, I would have appreciated an additional chapter entirely dedicated to animal communication. Understanding animal communication could provide valuable insights into our pets and, therefore, improve human-animal interaction. Although I recognise that it is a broad topic, having a dedicated chapter would have greatly interested me. However, it is important to acknowledge that the chapter discussing animal emotions (chapter 12) offers valuable insights into the realm of animal communication. Animals often convey their emotions through facial expressions, which serve as a means of communicating messages to conspecifics and to humans. It is important for humans to develop proficiency in interpreting these non-verbal cues and adjust their behaviour accordingly to attempt to establish effective and respectful interaction with animals.

In addition, although the list of references may be enough, the inclusion of a section with suggested readings at the end of each chapter would have been beneficial as it could have provided readers with the opportunity to explore specific topics further. Despite this, I found the glossary of

terms in the appendix to be extremely helpful and valuable.

The handbook is available in three different formats to suit readers' preferences: hardcover, paperback, and eBook format. Each format offers its own unique advantages, so readers can choose the one that best fits their needs.

This comprehensive book serves as an indispensable resource for students and scholars engaged in the study of animal behaviour, the philosophy of animal minds, animal ethics, ethology, anthropology, and related disciplines. It offers a thorough and lucid exploration of recent dialogues surrounding human-animal interaction and anthrozoology, presenting valuable insights for both academic and non-academic audiences. In addition to its academic value, this handbook also caters to the needs of pet owners and individuals contemplating pet adoption, offering them an opportunity to enhance their understanding of human-animal relationships and promote positive interactions between humans and animals.

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Note: The author used Grammarly, exclusively for checking and improving the text, over which she has authorship.