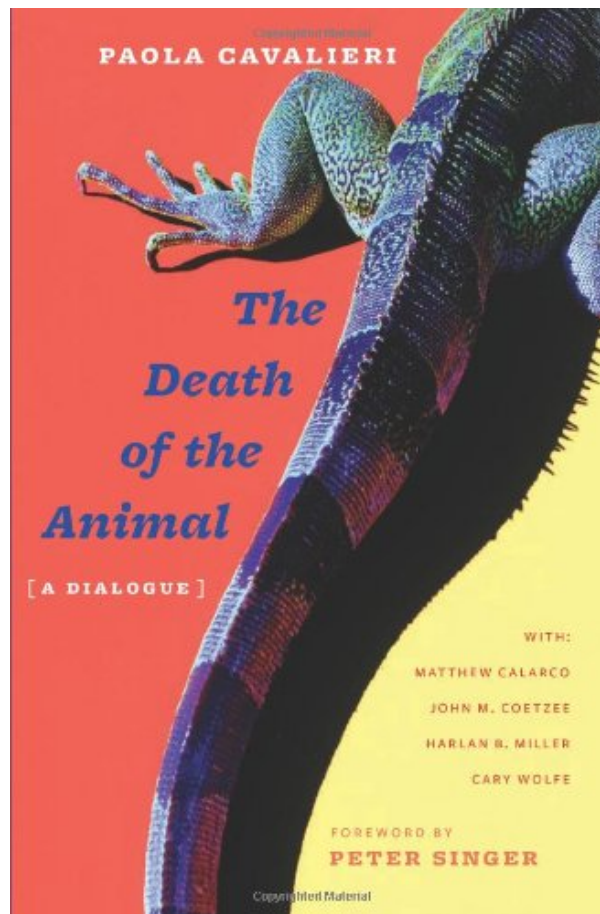
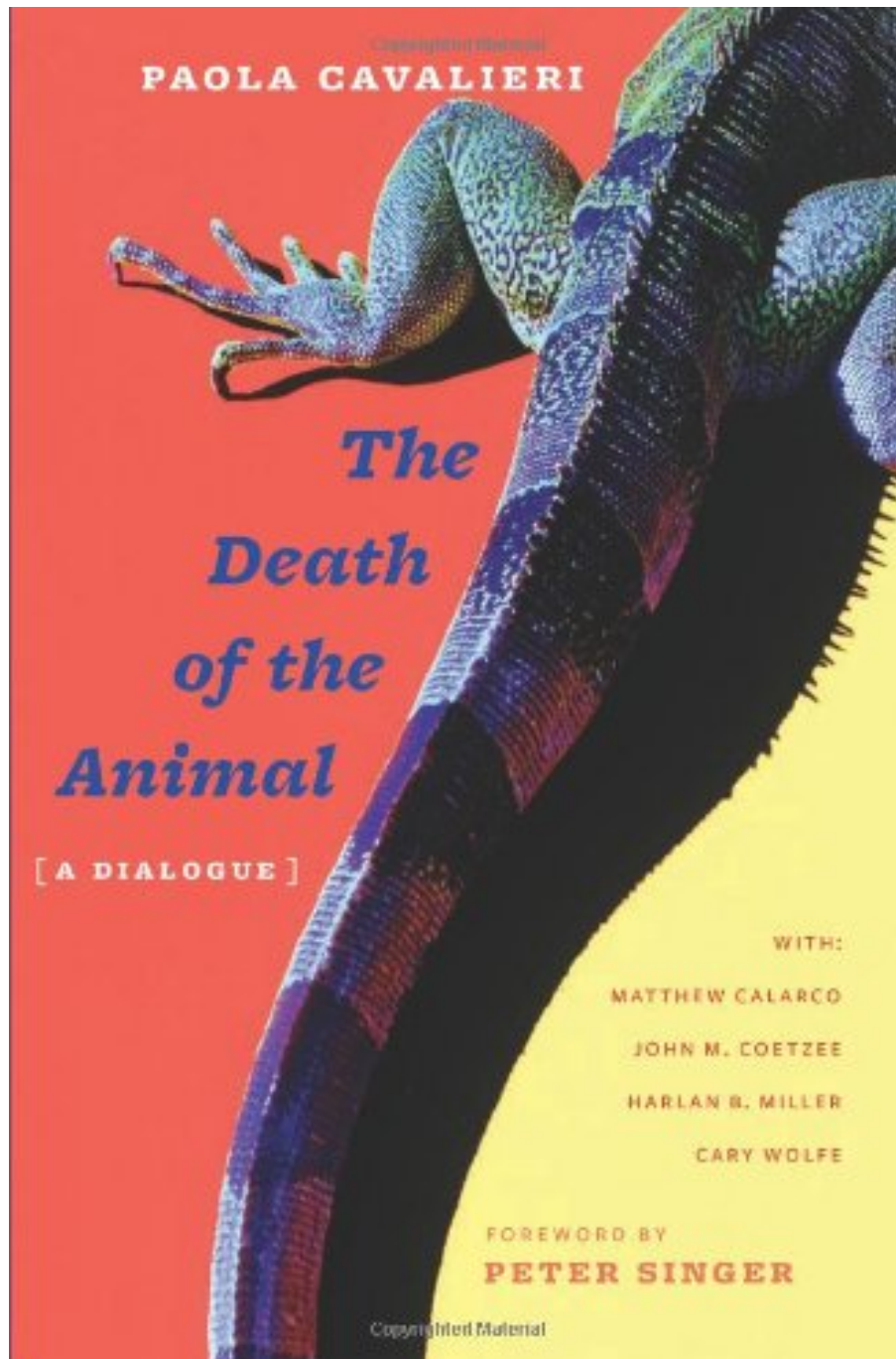


THE DEATH OF THE ANIMAL: A DIALOGUE BY PAOLA CAVALIERI



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Review

An imaginatively structured and thought-provoking addition to the growing Columbia University Press series in animal studies.

(Clare Palmer Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews)

This stimulating, unique book could have many uses in academic contexts... Recommended.

(Choice)

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The Death of the Animal is an important and timely book. The economy of its style and the inviting nature of its structure unfold critical debates for many audiences in a number of disciplines across philosophy, science, medicine, and the ever-expanding field of animal studies. Situated to make a salient contribution, Paola Cavalieri's book serves as an invigorating source for thinking about questions old and new so we may see ever more clearly how they continue to shape our futures.

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(Raymond Corbey, Tilburg University and Leiden University, and author of The Metaphysics of Apes: Negotiating the Animal-Human Boundary)

About the Author

Paola Cavalieri lives in Milan and is the editor of the international philosophy journal *Etica & Animali*. She is the author of *The Animal Question: Why Nonhuman Animals Deserve Human Rights* and, with Peter Singer, edited the award-winning book, *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity*.

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While moral perfectionists rank conscious beings according to their cognitive abilities, Paola Cavalieri launches a more inclusive defense of all forms of subjectivity. In concert with Peter Singer, J. M. Coetzee, Harlan B. Miller, and other leading animal studies scholars, she expands our understanding of the nonhuman in such a way that the derogatory category of "the animal" becomes meaningless. In so doing, she presents a nonhierarchical approach to ethics that better respects the value of the conscious self.

Cavalieri opens with a dialogue between two imagined philosophers, laying out her challenge to moral perfectionism and tracing its influence on our attitudes toward the "unworthy." She then follows with a roundtable "multilogue" which takes on the role of reason in ethics and the boundaries of moral status. Coetzee, Nobel Prize winner for Literature and author of *The Lives of Animals*, emphasizes the animality of human beings; Miller, a prominent analytic philosopher at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, dismantles the rationalizations of human bias; Cary Wolfe, professor of English at Rice University, advocates an active exposure to other worlds and beings; and Matthew Calarco, author of *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*, extends ethical consideration to entities that traditionally have little or no moral status, such as plants and ecosystems.

As Peter Singer writes in his foreword, the implications of this conversation extend far beyond the issue of the moral status of animals. They "get to the heart of some important differences about how we should do philosophy, and how philosophy can relate to our everyday life." From the divergences between analytical and continental approaches to the relevance of posthumanist thinking in contemporary ethics, the psychology of speciesism, and the practical consequences of an antiperfectionist stance, *The Death of the Animal* confronts issues that will concern anyone interested in a serious study of morality.

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3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

The Debate between Analytic versus Continental Philosophy Heats Up

By Martin Rowe

What a curious book! Paola Cavalieri composes a Socratic dialogue to argue for a non-speciesist view of animal rights, and four respondents critique (not to say criticize) the dialogue. Cary Wolfe and Matthew Calarco approach from (broadly) the perspective of critical theory and continental philosophy; Harlan Miller is mainly sympathetic to Cavalieri's project; and John (J. M.) Coetzee assails the bloodlessness and lack of realism in any philosophical approach by saying that most people (and animals) crave the physical pleasure that eating meat and killing other animals involve, and we need to get real and stop being so high-minded.

Cavalieri's somewhat peevish response to Wolfe and Calarco is to complain that continental philosophy essentially has its head up its arse and doesn't deal with reality that laws and rights matter. Calarco and Wolfe in turn tell her that she misunderstands such continental philosophers as Derrida and Levinas and that they (and Calarco and Wolfe) are interested in going beyond the anthropocentric and perfectionist boundaries that define the languages of rights and laws. Coetzee claims he was misunderstood and that, sure, thinking is as important as having sex and fun, but, he states, we need to employ more than just the brain in persuading people to change their habits. Calarco, Wolfe, and Miller come back in the end to wonder in their various ways and with differing degrees of intensity whether the spat between continental and analytical philosophy isn't all beside the point, given the vast horrors of industrialized animal abuse, but I'm not sure that the harmony is that convincing. Wolfe wonders whether they're all just talking past each other--which,

by the end, I also felt.

I find myself in sympathy with Wolfe and Calarco, and to a degree with Coetzee--although the last could have been a little less chilly in his championing of the quest for la dolce vita. On the other hand, I find myself wondering, perhaps along with Cavalieri, just what, therefore, we're expected to "do" when confronted with animal abuse. I'm also frankly irked (like Cavalieri) by Derrida's non-vegetarianism and Levinas's failure to acknowledge the animal's "face"--and no amount of fancy talk can convince me otherwise than it's some kind of failure of nerve. Nonetheless, whether you're analytic or continental, this is an intriguing book, not least as a curiosity. How Cavalieri must feel to write something and then have, within the pages of the same book, her effort taken to task so strongly, I can't imagine!

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Weighty subject matter

By Andrew Knox

For those who enjoy philosophical dialogues this book will be right up your alley. It was recommended to me by a friend and personally I didn't enjoy it all that much.

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