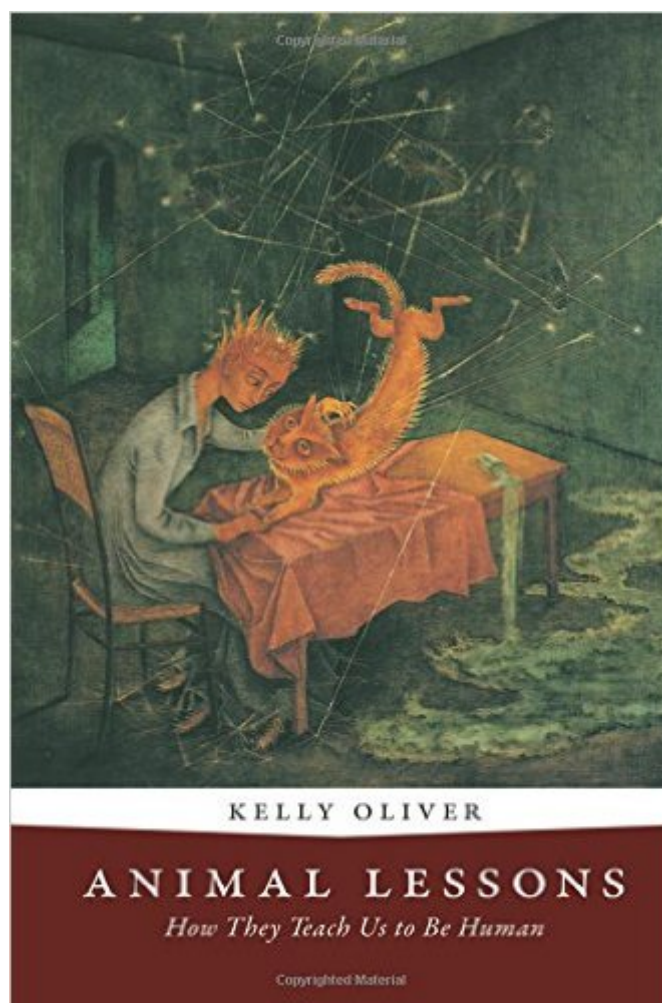# Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us To Be Human

Synopsis

Philosophy reads humanity against animality, arguing that "man" is man because he is separate from beast. Deftly challenging this position, Kelly Oliver proves that, in fact, it is the animal that teaches us to be human. Through their sex, their habits, and our perception of their purpose, animals show us how not to be them. This kinship plays out in a number of ways. We sacrifice animals to establish human kinship, but without the animal, the bonds of "brotherhood" fall apart. Either kinship with animals is possible or kinship with humans is impossible. Philosophy holds that humans and animals are distinct, but in defending this position, the discipline depends on a discourse that relies on the animal for its very definition of the human. Through these and other examples, Oliver does more than just establish an animal ethics. She transforms ethics by showing how its very origin is dependent upon the animal. Examining for the first time the treatment of the animal in the work of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Agamben, Freud, Lacan, and Kristeva, among others, Animal Lessons argues that the animal bites back, thereby reopening the question of the animal for philosophy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in animal ethics. Like many, I became interested in topics of animal rights and animal ethics after reading Peter Singer's Animal Liberation. Although I agree with Singer that our exploitation of animals is unwarranted, I am not a utilitarian, and I don't think pain/pleasure should be the primary measure for our ethical relationship with other creatures.

To me, Kelly Oliver's Animal Lessons is interesting and refreshing because, unlike other books on animal ethics, the author does not rely on the language of "interests," "rights," or "speciesism" in her arguments. (In fact, Part I of the book is devoted to the problems and limitations of the rights discourse. I believe every animal rights activist should read Part I--perhaps it's time to reconsider the rhetoric and strategy of the animal "rights" movement!)I will not rehearse the arguments of the book here. But the main thesis the author is advancing is that animals are our teachers. She demonstrates her thesis by examining the philosophical work of various thinkers (including Rousseau, Freud, Heidegger, Kristeva, and Derrida), and she shows both that animals figure prominently in their work and that, in an important sense, philosophers rely on animals to learn what it means to be human. I think her thesis is instructive to those of us who want to challenge the structure of animal exploitation in our society. Specifically, it's not enough to focus on what "rights" animals have against us humans, as if we could relate to animals only in a competitive way.

Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human A Tear And A Smile: "If you love somebody, let them go, for if they return, they were always yours. If they don't, they never were." Understanding Girls with ADHD, Updated and Revised: How They Feel and Why They Do What They Do The Big Book of Real Helicopters "How They Work * What They Do * Where They Fly" (Big Treasure Books) Defeating ISIS: Who They Are, How They Fight, What They Believe The 100 Best Business Books of All Time: What They Say, Why They Matter, and How They Can Help You The Common Core Mathematics Companion: The Standards Decoded, Grades K-2: What They Say, What They Mean, How to Teach Them The Common Core Companion: The Standards Decoded, Grades 9-12: What They Say, What They Mean, How to Teach Them (Corwin Literacy) 40 Years in Law Practice - Lessons Learned: What they don't Teach you in Law School Animal Control Management: A New Look At A Public Responsibility (New Directions in the Human-Animal Bond) They Do as They Please: The Jamaican Struggle for Cultural Freedom After Morant Bay They Wished They Were Honest: The Knapp Commission and New York City Police Corruption The Slot Machine Answer Book: How They Work, How They've Changed, and How to Overcome the House Advantage The Koreans: Who They Are, What They Want, Where Their Future Lies Never Let a Fool Kiss You or a Kiss Fool You : Chiasmus and a World of Quotations That Say What They Mean and Mean What They Say They Thought They Were Free: The Germans, 1933-45 Why We Write: 20 Acclaimed Authors on How and Why They Do What They Do Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Publishers, Editors and Literary Agents: Who They Are, What They Want, How to Win Them Over (Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Editors, Publishers, and Literary Agents) Perfect Soldiers: The 9/11 Hijackers: Who They

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