

# Review of “The link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence”

**T**he Link between Animal Abuse and Human Violence is a collection of papers, edited by Reverend Professor Andrew Linzey, most of which were presented at the International Conference on the Relationship between Animal Abuse and Human Violence held under the auspices of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics in 2007.

The book focuses upon the link between cruelty to animals and the abuse of vulnerable humans.

Whilst it has long been accepted by philosophers and great thinkers that there is a link between cruelty to animals and the abuse of vulnerable humans, there is now mounting empirical evidence of the connection. The papers in this book provide a critical overview of current theories and research in relation to this link

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and address the ethical issues and policy implications with multi-disciplinary contributions from international leaders in the field.

The book greatly benefits from a thoughtful and erudite introduction by Professor Linzey which introduces the key issues in this area and relates them to the various chapters in the book. There are contributions from academics and professionals from a wide range of disciplines and jurisdictions which further enhances the scope of the arguments put forward.

There are twenty seven papers in this book from 36 authors. The book is usefully divided into sections of papers which cover the following topics: Overview of Existing Research; Emotional Development and Emotional Abuse; Children, Family Violence and Animals; Animal Abuse and Serial Murder; Ethical Perspectives on Human-Animal Relations; Law Enforcement, Offenders and Sentencing Policy; Prevention and Professional Obligations; and The Abuse of Wild Animals. Professor Linzey introduces each section and summarises the key points from the individual papers. The book is organised in such a manner that it could be used for reference in relation to specific areas of interest or read in its totality.

Given the range of contributions in the papers, it is impossible to adequately represent the same within the confines of a short book review. A brief overview of some of the main issues examined in some of the papers will be summarised with the proviso that the book itself contains so much more of value and interest.

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The book significantly adds to the basic research undertaken to date by presenting compelling arguments that the failure to address the cruelty connection is “short changing” child welfare and that cruelty to animals is a matter of moral concern given the sentience and capacity to suffer of the animal concerned.

Whilst some of the research undertaken on the cruelty connection has been criticised due to methodological problems, there is mounting consensus that there now



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exists substantial theoretical and empirical evidence to support a link between human violence and animal abuse which should raise concern for the welfare of the children, adult victims of domestic violence and animals concerned. Cruelty to animals in childhood is associated with later harmful antisocial behaviour including violence, sex offending, non-violent crime and vandalism. There is evidence to suggest that children may be at risk of significant harm in families where there is cruelty to animals, that animal and child abuse co-exists and that cruelty to animals by children has potential implications for future violent behaviour.

Powerful moral arguments are put forward in some of the papers that animals should not be viewed in purely instrumental terms in the cruelty connection debate with regard to the negative impact of animal cruelty upon the human perpetrator and their human victim. The abuse of animals is also morally wrong because animals have the right not to be harmed and neglected and merit respectful treatment as inherently valuable beings.

Professor Linzey advocates that a holistic approach will require that we challenge abuse even where there are apparent benefits to humankind (“necessary cruelty” such as that involved in the meat and vivisection industries) otherwise we are vulnerable to the argument that anything which benefits human

beings is morally justifiable. Professor Linzey states that this moral calculus should be questioned and we should ask whether any practice which involves cruelty to animals can benefit humankind.

The subject matter of this book, the link between cruelty to animals and the abuse of vulnerable people, is of great importance and the book itself provides an invaluable and authoritative introduction and overview of the main and wider issues in this debate.

Without exception, the papers and the contributions of Professor Linzey significantly add to the knowledge base relating to the cruelty connection and the book will be an invaluable resource for researchers, policy makers and those working in the field with responsibilities for the protection of vulnerable people and animals. The book merits wider readership and adds to the growing debate about the morality of our treatment of animals.

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