

CHAPTER 31

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BUDDHISM AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

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PAUL WALDAU

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INTRODUCTION

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THE diverse intersection of human with nonhuman lives has long been an ethically fraught meeting place.¹ In many discussions around the world, the moral issues raised by the inevitable meeting of humans and nonhuman animals are subordinated to strictly human concerns because the issues raised by humans' encounters with nonhumans are deemed far less important than the issues generated by human-to-human encounters. Yet for Buddhists, some other religious traditions, a substantial number of small-scale societies around the world, and many individual citizens and animal protection organizations in industrialized societies, humans' inescapable interactions with nonhumans comprise a crucial subset of the moral issues raised when one living individual harms or extinguishes the life of another living being.

Even a superficial engagement with Buddhist ethical reflection reveals that Buddhists have prized humans' capacious abilities to care for living beings within *and* beyond the species line. A closer examination of Buddhist reflection on humans' relationship to other animals, however, permits one to see complex, multifaceted challenges that arise regularly for all humans who desire not only to protect, but also to notice and take seriously, the living beings outside our own species. In the first part of this chapter, Buddhist insights about the importance of *not* harming other living beings are examined in relationship to many familiar categories of human–nonhuman interactions, including food animals, companion animals, free-living or wild animals, and those nonhuman beings used solely for humans' benefit as work animals, sources of food and other materials,

¹ I first wrote an article under the title 'Buddhism and Animal Rights' as a chapter in *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Damien Keown (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2000), 81–112.

entertainment, or mere research tools. In the second part, challenges that fall under the modern term 'animal rights' are addressed as they also provide illuminating perspectives on not only Buddhist attitudes towards nonhuman animals but also the very nature and extent of humans' ethical capacities to care about the individuals and communities that are the warp and weft of what a highly respected twentieth-century visionary referred to as Earth's 'larger community' (Berry 2006: 5).

BUDDHISTS AND OTHER ANIMALS

Buddhists have long recognized, as do modern science and common sense in every culture, that humans are animals. But given that so many of the modern world's key domains (such as law, education, public policy, and economics, mentioned in the second part of the chapter) operate as if the dualism 'human versus animal' is a feature of the natural world rather than an artificial division that elevates humans through a denial of our obvious animality, it is worth exploring key features of Buddhist attitudes towards the most familiar nonhuman animals. To explore this topic well, one must consider two noteworthy but distinct diversities.

First, there is an extraordinary range of differences evident when one surveys the living beings in the grouping that modern sciences label 'nonhuman animals'. Today's dominant ways of talking have, however, conditioned most people to use the clearly anti-scientific habit of calling only nonhumans 'animals' in order to distinguish them from human animals. It is now accepted fact that our Earth is populated by countless different kinds of living beings. The number of different species is not at all well known—in fact, despite the extraordinary efforts made in the last century to count the number of Earth's species, scientists who offer their best guesses about the number of existing species acknowledge that such estimates may be off by a factor of ten. In other words, instead of there being, as present estimates surmise, eight to ten million species (only two million of which have been identified), there may in fact be 80–100 million *different* species. As noted in more detail in the second part of the chapter, the vast majority of the Earth's living beings are best described as 'micro animals' that our unaided senses cannot detect or relate to as discrete individuals. For example, the population of micro animals on and in any one human individual (or any other macro animal) is unfathomably large; as Kurokawa writes, 'In adults, the combined microbial populations exceed 100 trillion cells, about 10 times the total number of cells composing the human body' (2007: 169–170).

For obvious reasons, the forms of human ethics bequeathed to us by our human ancestors, including of course Buddhist ethics, focus only on the many 'macro' nonhumans that are easily visible to us. Our inherited ethical systems indicate that from time immemorial, humans have been concerned about our intersection with other macro animals. Further, as described in the second part of the chapter, in the past few decades many more specific details have been learned about nonhuman macro animals,

making it far easier to assess the direct and immediate consequences of holding them captive, disrupting or destroying their habitat, or killing them for food and materials. The upshot of this great increase in knowledge is that every ethical tradition today faces new challenges to respond in caring, nuanced ways that take account of what today is demonstrably true of the more complex of our nonhuman neighbours. As noted below, the Buddhist tradition has affirmed in almost countless ways that humans are obliged to pay attention to those other living beings we are capable of noticing, and to take those beings seriously in an ethical sense. This robust affirmation (discussed later in this section) goes well beyond most forms of modern animal protection, which, as is discussed in the second part of the chapter, include only a few thousand species of the world's macro animals.

The extraordinary diversity and ubiquity of nonhuman lives, which pose a series of challenges to any ethically able observer, were met by the early Buddhists in intriguing, ethics-intensive ways that model well the central role that care for others plays in humans' daily lives and spiritual awareness. This is true despite the fact that humans' ethical abilities, so clearly rich and remarkable regarding ourselves and some familiar macro animals like elephants and dogs, are, as pointed out in the second part of the chapter, unquestionably limited in a number of profoundly important ways.

A second diversity is also noteworthy. This is the altogether different kind of diversity of sub-traditions found within Buddhism. It is common to encounter descriptions of the tradition as divided into Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna or Tantrayāna—yet each of these major sub-traditions is, upon exploration, found to be comprised of many further subdivisions. Beyond the most familiar sub-traditions are more well-known forms of Buddhism such as Tibetan, Zen, and Pure Land Buddhism, and these are complemented today with many forms of what some scholars call 'New Buddhist Movements'. In actuality, the Buddhist tradition is, like all mature religious traditions, characterized by great internal diversity, which is why Richard Gombrich, one of the great scholars of Buddhism in the twentieth century, observed, 'About *all* Buddhists few valid generalizations are possible' (1988: 2). Nonetheless, it is revealing that '[o]n the complex and difficult issue of "other animals" it is possible to identify 'unanimity of a kind on the [ethical] significance which real, live individuals of other species have in the minds of Buddhists' (Waldau 2001: 153).

A Remarkable Foundation—The First Precept

One of humans' surpassing achievements in ethics appears in the Buddhist tradition's commitment to what is often described as 'the First Precept'. This moral vow or undertaking is stated in a variety of ways, as sometimes it is directed to *intentional killing* and at other times its focus is the more general problem of avoiding harm to other living beings (Waldau 2001: 146–149). At the very least, following the First Precept commits a Buddhist to a conscious effort to refrain from intentional killing any living being. As Lambert Schmithausen suggests, 'in the First Precept, and hence also for a Buddhist lay

person, society is not to be taken in the narrow sense of human society, but in a broader sense of a community comprising all living or sentient beings' (1991a: 40; see also 1991b).

The First Precept is, most likely, not solely a Buddhist achievement, for this important commitment almost surely predates the Buddhist tradition. As Schmithausen suggests, a commitment to refrain from killing is 'the heritage of an earlier cultural stratum—a stratum in which killing animals (and even plants, earth and water) was, in a sense at least, as serious as killing people (not of course one's own ethnic group), because animals, too, were believed to take, if possible, revenge on the killer in the yonder world' (1991a: 38–39; see also McDermott 1989: 274). Snakes, for example, were thought to take offence that snake flesh was eaten, retaliating against the perpetrator. Other animals were thought to sense the odour of flesh eaten, this odour encouraging an attack by that kind of animal.

This key prohibition very likely has other roots as well. Particularly common, for example, are claims that connect the First Precept to early Buddhism's adoption of the belief in rebirth that was so characteristic of Indian subcontinent traditions—a belief that made possible the reasoning that the First Precept was important because every other being now living was in a prior life one's parent (either father or mother). Echoes of this sort of familial thinking can be found in the *Metta Sutta*: 'Just as a mother would protect with her life her own son, her only son, so one should cultivate an unbounded mind towards all beings, and loving kindness towards all the world' (Sn I.8; Norman 1984: 149–150). Damien Keown notes that although there is no definitive statement as to which forms of life are valued and why, Buddhists value forms of life that are 'karmic' or 'telic' (having a telos, or goal); the basis for this kind of valuing is possibly the assumption that other living beings have an 'intrinsic' value, that is, each living being is 'affirmatively valued for its own sake rather than as a means to something else (i.e., its value is not instrumental)' (1995: 36ff.)

Such multiple possibilities cited in connection with the First Precept explain why Horner suggests that 'no doubt a mixture of motives operated' in making the First Precept central to all sorts of Buddhists—notice how the following explanation of the First Precept's pre-eminence connects this undertaking to a wide range of human values and experiences:

Such championship may have seen in non-harming a way to increase the moral welfare of the monks; it may have been part of a disinterested social reform movement; it may have been, as in the case of sacrifice, polemical in nature, anti-brahminical; and it may have been due to the presumption that animals have as much right to their lives, and to compassion, as have human beings. (Horner 1967: 27)

Whatever reason an individual Buddhist gives for his or her daily undertaking not to kill any living being, this commitment is a foundational ethical undertaking in several senses. It clearly broadens the range of beings about whom one should care; it is primary also in the sense that this commitment plays out in daily life; additionally, such a commitment requires one to notice, and then take seriously, one's nonhuman neighbours.

Thus, the *actual* lives in one's immediate environs—local elephants and tigers, neighbouring deer and dogs, and so many other macro animals, including humans—are deemed morally important. Such foundational features help account for why the First Precept was constantly foregrounded in Buddhist awareness in multiple ways, all with the effect of constantly reaffirming Buddhists' commitment to act in ways that protect animal lives. In a very real way, the constant reaffirmation honours the Buddhist insight that our human lives are lived within an overarching moral order, a principal feature of which is the sanctity of individual lives. The upshot is an engendering of animal protection and the positioning of daily compassion at the heart of the tradition.

This achievement has, it is true, been matched in a number of other religious traditions and cultures, of which the Jains are perhaps the best known. One can also find similar commitments in many small-scale societies, and a number of sub-traditions within the large and diverse Hindu, Sikh, Chinese, and Abrahamic traditions. The occurrence of such commitments in multiple places and different historical eras can be used to suggest that humans have recognized that each of us can, *if we choose*, live an encompassing ethical vision regarding both our local world and the larger community of living beings. With confidence, however, one can assert that few human communities, if any, have done so more impressively than have Buddhists, even though the tradition began at a time of limited awareness of the details of the lives of nonhuman neighbours who share ecological and geographical space with the human community.

Consider, then, an important consequence of the First Precept in light of the great diversity evident in nonhuman animals—many different kinds of animals, as already noted, come squarely within the First Precept's foundational concern for humans' interactions with living beings beyond the species line. The Buddha is reported, for example, to have observed that those who hold animals captive for entertainment purposes will suffer an awful fate (Rhys Davids 1922: 172). Today, there is much ferment around the world regarding the ethical propriety of exhibiting certain animals for entertainment, as happens in marine parks that promote performances by cetaceans (whales and dolphins) of one kind or another. Some countries have outlawed such exhibitions, and some proprietors have voluntarily agreed (in response to protests and heavy media-based criticism) to end breeding programmes of, for example, orcas and elephants.

The First Precept also applies, of course, to the much larger and more traditional area of human domination of nonhuman animals for food and materials. The historical Buddha is quoted repeatedly in Buddhist scriptures as observing that an awful fate awaits those who kill other animals, such as deer hunters, pig butchers, sheep butchers, and fowlers. In this particular area, the First Precept provides a basis for challenging the longstanding assumptions that dominate some of the most important ways modern humans talk about other animals, such as law-based and economics-based discourse that assumes any and all nonhuman animals can be mere resources rightfully owned by humans, but also killed at humans' whim, including for luxuries that are indisputably non-essential to a thriving human life. One can, therefore, argue that the historical Buddha laid out an approach that requires Buddhists to condemn unequivocally those

who confine food animals in the manner of industrialized, 'factory' farming that produces most of the meat consumed today.

Similar reasoning can be applied to confinement and killing, and even harms short of death, that are part the annual killing of hundreds of millions of laboratory animals around the world in pursuit of research and product development that is a hallmark feature of modern economies. Justifications for such practices sometimes invoke utilitarian thinking (the good that flows to humans because of these practices is alleged to greatly outweigh the admitted harms to nonhumans). As or more often, however, the justification of the harms to and killing of nonhuman animals is, simply said, an outright denial of any value to the lives of the nonhuman experimental subjects. Such rationalizations of killing and other serious harms remain largely unquestioned today in mainline science, education, and government circles (Waldau 2001, 2006, 2011, 2013, and 2016).

Such attention to harms can also produce important insights about the most familiar of nonhuman beings today, namely, the 'domesticated animals' traditionally referred to as 'pets' and more recently as 'companion animals.' These animals—mostly dogs, cats, and horses, but also rabbits, birds, pigs, rats, mice, guinea pigs, and *dozens* of other species as well—are so familiar to their owners that they are often referred to as family members. This verbal habit is, of course, not accurate biology, but it nonetheless effectively signals to any listener that the speaker takes such beings seriously.

Owned companion animals in modern, industrialized societies are, to be sure, increasingly protected, although by no means fully so. Stray dogs, cats, horses, and on and on are not, however, well protected today, and the First Precept clearly has much to say about the intentional killing of so many unowned, unwanted, and 'feral' members of this 'companion animal' group. Consider dogs, for example—of the roughly one billion dogs alive today, only about one quarter fit into the common paradigm of an owned animal living with a human family (Coppinger and Coppinger 2016). The number killed intentionally each year around the world simply for want of a good home is unknown, although it surely reaches into the tens of millions.

The First Precept speaks not only to such intentional killing, but also to the intentional cruelties visited upon owned and unowned animals in this familiar category—the problem of intentional cruelty in contemporary societies is nominally addressed by anti-cruelty laws, but such laws are inconsistently enforced on owned animals and rarely apply to the hundreds and hundreds of millions of feral dogs, cats, and other nonhuman animals that roam the Earth today.

The First Precept has particular relevance to another major animal category that modern anti-cruelty laws do not focus on in *any* effective way at all, namely, the vast category of free-living individuals and communities that we traditionally group under the term 'wildlife.' In its proscription of killing, the First Precept is simply remarkable in its directness *and scope* regarding these animals. This is significant because the other categories—entertainment animals, food animals, research animals, and companion animals—are *constructed* categories integrally connected to human uses and needs. The question of nonhuman animals that live in their own communities and which are not integral parts of human uses and ownership is important for another reason—these

free-living individuals and communities are in peril today. This group of animals has, as a category, suffered extraordinary devastation in the last few centuries, a fact which is poignantly captured not only by the current crisis of extinctions of nonhuman species but also by the comment of a respected Canadian naturalist regarding '[the] massive diminution of the entire body corporate of animate creation . . . species that still survive as distinct life forms but have suffered horrendous diminishment' (Mowat 1996: 14).

The First Precept, then, prompts powerful questions about human choices that ignore fundamental moral issues involved in killing. It challenges the penchant today to use strictly utilitarian calculations to evaluate the use and abuse of nonhuman animals as resources that benefit humans rather than as fellow citizens of the larger community.

ANIMAL RIGHTS AND OTHER ANIMALS

It is hard to miss that the remarkable sensibilities toward nonhuman animals discussed above promote a way of living that is consonant with certain key features of modern animal protection sentiments. This worldwide movement is diverse in many ways, and goes under a variety of names other than 'animal protection' and 'animal rights', including 'animal welfare', 'anticruelty', and 'animal liberation' (Singer 1975). Animal protection in its modern forms is supported today by many academic disciplines such as animal law, animals and religion, animal studies, human–animal studies, anthrozoology, critical animal studies, and more (Waldau 2013). Yet, the focus of animal protection organizations around the world remains, relative to the First Precept, strikingly narrow. The target animals belong to perhaps several thousand species from the almost 5,000 species of mammals, 10,000 species of birds, and perhaps a thousand or fewer additional species drawn from amphibians, reptiles, fish, and insects. There are, to be sure, forms of ethics such as 'environmental ethics' or 'bioethics' that can, at times, go beyond macro animals and some of the most charismatic insects (such as monarch butterflies), but even these broad-minded efforts address only a small percentage of the Earth's millions and millions of species. In fact, much environmental protection is so pitched to human-level concerns that it would not be unusual if someone concluded that this large movement remains, on the whole, a human-centred enterprise.

'Animal rights' and its many synonyms, then, today carry multiple meanings developed over the last two centuries as modern humans have explored the ethically charged intersection of human and nonhuman lives (Waldau 2011). These meanings characteristically invoke moral values, but also call upon legal concepts and tools, such as specific legal rights for individuals and broader legislative prohibitions of certain acts considered, for example, to be cruel. 'Animal rights' (using this term as a generic description of all animal protection efforts), then, has had a noteworthy impact around the world since the 1970s, namely, increased awareness that, in turn, has prompted a constantly expanding series of discussions about how traditional and new ethical visions might respond to human impacts on non-human living beings. One option that has become well known

because of Buddhists, Jains, small-scale/indigenous societies, and various secular movements is quite close to the spirit of the First Precept; namely, bringing certain nonhuman animals into the centre of ethical discussion, thereby moving away from an exclusive focus on humans. Another option has been to study the fact that some ancient cultures (and, yet again, in this matter the Buddhist tradition offers a paradigmatic example) have long insisted that the human–nonhuman intersection *necessarily* raises ethical concerns of the highest order.

While noteworthy results of the animal protection movement include the enactment within many societies of more protective laws and the emergence of forms of education that again take seriously humans' obligations to the more-than-human world, the impacts of today's increased awareness of problems at the human–nonhuman intersection go much further. There is today, for example, a renaissance in many of the ethical circles around the world, and this is particularly true within the Euro-American sphere that had for centuries featured radically human-centred accounts of the prized human abilities to care about 'others' that we name with terms like 'ethics' and 'morality'. Both an effect of this renaissance, but also a force pushing it further forward, has been engagement with the Buddhist tradition and, of course, the tradition's long-standing ethical inclusiveness regarding nonhuman animals. Such comparative and cross-cultural work, by which the extraordinary achievements of many different cultures and religious traditions are considered in relation to one another, has prospects of helping everyone see the different ways that extending ethics across the species line can produce valuable insights about the ethical challenges that humans face on a daily basis.

Consider whether animal rights (in the generic sense of animal protection) offers *additional* insights that, in turn, help the Buddhist tradition see further possibilities in its own profound commitment to the First Precept. A minor example opens this issue up nicely. One possible clarification of certain commitments not to kill another living being is recognition that in macro-to-macro animal encounters, harms to others may in some circumstances be a practical necessity, as in matters of self-defence or protection of one's extended family. Killing one's attacker in such cases may be the only way to stop the attack, and many have argued that killing as a last resort in such situations should not be completely proscribed for the moral being. Buddhists could answer, however, that in some cases when the Buddha in a past life was a nonhuman animal, he intentionally chose to sacrifice his life, although this was often for the sake of others rather than merely to stop an attack—similarly, Sutta 145 in the *Majjhima Nikaya* includes advice given by the Buddha to Punna that illustrates a similar nonviolent response to a threat of violence (Nanamoli and Bodhi 1995: 1117–1119).

This minor problem is overshadowed by profoundly more complex issues that arise because of fundamental limitations in our abilities to discern other living beings' individual and social realities. Humans struggle when considering such realities of their fellow species members, and all the more so regarding the actual realities of nonhuman animals who often have different sensory abilities and radically different modes of communication and perception. Further, consider another feature of the micro/macro problem. An unnoticed aspect of humans' finite ethical capacities is our inability to identify, let alone control,

the trials and tribulations which our daily choices visit upon countless living beings invisible to humans. Aided by technology, such as microscopes, developed since the late seventeenth century, we know that our everyday world is populated very small living beings whose lives are unimaginably different than those of the macro animals with which we are much more familiar. In daily life where a macro animal acts in ways that often kill micro animals on, in, and near the macro individual, there is no easy way to follow the First Precept. The First Precept remains powerful, of course, as a guide for humans' treatment of their fellow 'macro' animals. In this familiar domain, it offers a powerful critique of many intentional killings that occur in today's industrialized world. It is also directly relevant to the profound harms caused by holding other macro animals captive or disrupting or destroying the habitats of nonhuman communities. The upshot of such increased knowledge about the multiple ways that human choices create suffering and death for other living beings, both macro and micro, is that every ethical tradition today faces new challenges to respond in caring, nuanced ways that take account of what today is clearly known about the realities and abilities of humans' innumerable and often unseen nonhuman neighbours in local communities as well as those in our larger, shared Earth community.

Balances to Strike

Plumbing the implications of Buddhist views of nonhuman animals must go beyond the important step of lauding Buddhists' obvious concern for living beings outside the human species. In fact, as one encounters a justifiable excitement evident in scholars impressed by the deep commitment Buddhists asserted from the beginning of the tradition about the importance of refraining in daily life from killing other living beings, something akin to a balancing act is needed. A too heavy focus on the positive achievements, while understandable in today's world so starved of major ethical sources focusing on nonhuman animals, can obscure other, altogether relevant features of the tradition. For example, even a cursory review of Buddhist scriptures makes it clear that Buddhists at times acquiesced to harmful practices that fall short of death (discussed below regarding elephants), and thereby failed to notice serious harms that held centre stage in the societies in which the Buddhist tradition was born. As noted below, when attention is given to the non-lethal harms suffered by certain nonhuman animals as part of widespread, Buddhist-sanctioned practices, a full and fair evaluation of Buddhist attitudes towards nonhuman animals, especially in terms of ideas and values advanced by modern animal rights advocates, includes questions about whether Buddhist attitudes to certain non-lethal harms were consistent with the spirit and driving insights of the remarkable foregrounding of the First Precept's injunction to avoid intentional killing.

As we attempt such a balancing act, a crucial feature of the Buddhist tradition must be given due consideration, for it is strikingly different in spirit from that which drives a foundational value evident in contemporary animal rights discussions. Buddhists were not, as are today's animal protectionists, concerned to inventory the world. A listing of other animal species, a search for other animals' true abilities and realities, a dispassionate

description of what humans can claim to *really* know about other animals—such familiar achievements are eminently those of a passionate, ethical disposition working hand in glove with the best of the dispassionate methods of the modern scientific search for truth. Because Buddhists were not motivated by a science-driven outlook or mentality, one risk to consider, then, is whether it is anachronistic to ask how an ancient religious tradition dealt with concerns framed in terms drawn from discussions developed millennia later.

Modern Animal Rights

A worldwide movement today replete with diverse ideas that rival the diversity evident across Buddhism's sub-traditions, the animal protection movement has fostered many important insights with impressive consequences that are different than the spirit and achievements of the First Precept. Yet because both movements are ethically charged, these two human achievements have some remarkably interesting overlaps. Neither movement exhausts the insights available to humans who recognize the importance of, first, noticing other animals and, second, then taking them seriously.

Contemporary animal protection efforts are, like the Buddhist tradition, surprisingly mixed on the issue of fundamental protections for nonhuman animals. It is true that modern animal protection includes approaches that propose *fundamental* limits on killing nonhuman animals—in this feature, the modern movement has some overlap with the Buddhist First Precept. The worldwide animal protection movement today features an extraordinary range of efforts to abolish or ameliorate a number of the harms done intentionally to certain animals used in research, food production, entertainment, or to wildlife living in or near human communities. Both movements, then, foreground protections that shield certain interests of individual nonhuman individuals in ways that imply such interests are more important than humans' interests in using the protected nonhumans as mere resources.

But 'animal rights' (in the generic sense of animal protection) is not a uniform set of ideas and values any more than Buddhism is. Indeed, upon closer examination, 'animal rights' functions as an umbrella term under which sit, so to speak, several distinguishable notions, of which four are listed here. 'Animal rights' includes, for example, both the notion of 'moral rights' for certain nonhuman animals and also the altogether distinct idea of 'legal rights' for individual nonhumans of a small number of species (Dalal and Taylor 2014; Chapple 2014; Waldau 2011: 57–61; Keown et al. 1998). A third concept called 'animal welfare' must also be distinguished because, while it signals forms of animal protection that many people associate with the term 'animal rights', this term carries two dramatically different senses. There is a tepid sense of 'animal welfare', which is dissimilar from the kinds of animal protection associated with the First Precept or legal rights that shield a living being from serious harms. As I have written:

[M]any people today use the idea of "animal welfare" to preserve human domination over certain animals. Some advocates of human superiority have rationalized

humans' domination over other living beings by focusing on attempts to ameliorate in minor ways the terrible conditions that such domination creates for animals. Such rationalizations lead some to think that when we concede minor welfare improvements to farm animals or research animals, our domination of these animals is "gentler" or "less harsh", and thus ethically adequate. This version of "animal welfare" leads with the suggestion "let's improve their welfare" *but at the same time* maintains the right of humans to total domination as we do experiments on them or use them for food or resources. . . . When "animal welfare" comes to mean primarily that tough conditions for the animal are made better in some minor respect . . . the meaning of the word 'welfare' has been stretched so dramatically that it misleads . . . thus harming listeners' ability to make informed moral choices. (2011: 95–96)

Separating this tepid, weak sense of 'animal welfare' from the original, far more robust sense of 'animal welfare' helps immensely with the task of illuminating the sentiments expressed in the First Precept. I continued:

The more substantial idea of welfare involves the animals' freedom from harms like captivity and pain, as well as the freedom to move around. When any of these important freedoms is violated, as it so often is when the minor sense of "animal welfare" prevails, there is very little true "welfare" that is being proposed . . . [as is the case when what prevails is] a more robust [animal welfare] concept along the lines of true moral protections for other animals because the latter matter in and of themselves. (2011: 95, 99)

There is significant overlap in a robust sense of 'animal welfare' and the Buddhist imperative so strongly stated in the First Precept. Modern animal protectionists who assert that killing other animals is morally problematic *and* also *live squarely within* the ethical spirit of such a commitment by conscientiously choosing forms of modern life that minimize harms to nonhuman animals (for example, ethical veganism) clearly have commitments that overlap with the commitments of Buddhists who work hard to live by the First Precept.

Comparing Animal Rights with Buddhist Views of Animal Protection

The modern animal rights movement has limits that can be used to reveal how powerful the insights are that undergird the First Precept. The modern movement does not, as a practical matter, offer all nonhuman animals protection. Characteristically, the nonhumans protected in early twenty-first-century animal protection efforts are either familiar animals (such as companion animals) or charismatic wildlife that is far away and not used in food or other economics-driven industries. In other words, the living beings focused on by major animal protection groups in the secular world comprise only a few hundred to a few thousand species of the millions upon millions of nonhuman animal species. The First Precept is not nearly so limited.