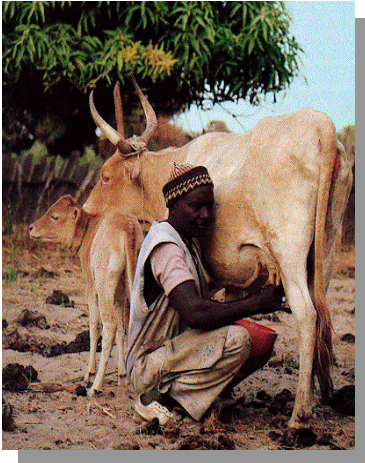


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A Critical Reflection on Methodological Traditions in the Assessment of Animal Welfare with Relevance to Tropical Livestock Agriculture



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INTRODUCTION

Problem

- **Considerable public interest in animal welfare in many Western countries**
- **Change in the value system**
- **Adoption of animal welfare concerns in animal welfare legislation**



INTRODUCTION

Problem

- **Science is required to provide appropriate measures for the assessment of animal welfare**
- **Although different approaches have been established, there is an on-going debate on the matter**



INTRODUCTION

Problem

- **Involvement of animal welfare concerns in international trade agreements**
- **Value system of other cultures may be affected and interests are stricken**



INTRODUCTION

Problem

In view of an acceptable decision-making on issues of animal welfare, it is considered helpful to gain deeper insight into the principles of science and ethics



INTRODUCTION

Objectives

Critical reflection on methodological traditions in the assessment of animal welfare:

- 1 Explanation of the concept of animal welfare**
- 2 Critical reflection on methodological traditions in science**
- 3 Ethical reflection on methodological traditions**



WELFARE CONCEPT

Physical and mental well-being

Welfare of farm animals includes physical and mental well-being

- **Physical health, freedom from injury**
- **Animals' "feelings" about their bodily state, animals' perceptions about their environment (Duncan and Poole, 1990)**



WELFARE CONCEPT

Animals' subjective experience

- **Definitions should reflect the animals' perspective on their own welfare**
- **Practically animal welfare is assessed by behavioural, physiological and pathological variables (Gonyou, 1993)**



WELFARE CONCEPT

Involving values

- **Not a purely scientific concept (e.g. Fraser, 1995)**
- **Involves values about what is better or worse for the quality of life of animals (e.g. Tannenbaum, 1991)**
- **Definitions of welfare will vary depending on the cultural background (Swanson, 1995)**



WELFARE CONCEPT

Consequences for the welfare assessment

The concept of animal welfare includes

- 1. Physical and mental well-being of animals**
- 2. Subjective experience in animals**
- 3. Value judgements about the quality of animals' life**



WELFARE CONCEPT

Consequences for the welfare assessment

- The assessment of animal welfare cannot be separated from science tradition and the development of ethics**



REFLECTIONS IN SCIENCE

Quantification and objectivity

Descartes aims at the „mathematization of scientific methodology (Buchdahl, 1969)

According to Gerten (2001), ideals in modern science are

- **quantitative measures and mathematical evidences**
- **objectivity attained by making data replicable and verifiable**



REFLECTIONS IN SCIENCE

Quantification and objectivity

Altner (1993) argues against the „mathematization“ of reality stating that the nature does not only consist on quantitative but also on qualitative features



REFLECTIONS IN SCIENCE

Reductionism

Perceived qualities in nature are to be reduced to those determinants which are accessible with mathematical methods (Röd, 1995; Cassirer, 1995)



REFLECTIONS IN SCIENCE

Reductionism

- Altner (1993) criticises that view, he points out that the scientific research process is characterised by a subject-object-dualism.
- He states, that within the process, nature figures as an object which is modified in a manner that it is accessible to statistical analysis.



REFLECTIONS IN SCIENCE

Science is value-free

- **The view that science is value-free is a commonly held opinion by scientists**
- **Rollin (1996) claims that the scientific revolution of Descartes, and others was based on a value judgement**



REFLECTIONS IN SCIENCE

Denial of mental and subjective states in animals

- **Rollin (1996) observed a denial of mental states and subjective experiences in modern science**
- **Descartes theses: „Animals function like automata or machines“ (Röd, 1995)**



Consequences for the assessment

The concept of animal welfare

Main characteristics of traditions in science

	Physical well-being	Mental well-being	Subjective experience	Involving values
Quantification and objectivity	+	o	-	-
Reduction to quantities and simple terms	+	o	-	-
Claim that science is value-free	+	-	-	-
Denial of mental and subjective states	+	-	-	-

+ covered o partly covered - not covered



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

Definition of ethics

- **Ethics derived from *ethos*, meaning “custom”**
- **It has to do not so much with factual knowledge as it has with values (Des Jardins, 1997 and others)**



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

Definition of ethics

- **Descriptive ethics aims at the empirical examination and description of moral standards, about what is right and wrong, good and bad**
- **Moral standards are regarded to be specific to any culture (Des Jardins, 1997 and others)**



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

Definition of ethics

- **Normative ethics is concerned with establishing norms for conduct**
- **The justification of these norms is based on general principles or theories**
- **These general principles claim universal validity (Des Jardins, 1997 and others)**



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

The view of moral absolutism

Holds that there are moral principles that apply to all people everywhere,

even to those who do not acknowledge these particular principles

Holds that there are true universal principles (Cook, 1999)



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

The view of moral relativism

Denies the possibility of general validity of ethical judgements (Des Jardin, 1997)

It is a mistake for anyone to think that he knows what is right and wrong for everyone everywhere (Cook, 1999)



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

Criticism on the view of moral absolutism

Herskovits cited in Cook (1999) states that, „if we had acquired our moral views in the way we of a rational fact-finding procedure,

then we could criticize other cultures, wherever their morality differs from ours.“



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

Criticism on the view of moral absolutism

„Moral principles are acquired not by any rational process,

but by the causal process of “enculturative conditioning,” that is,

they are impressed upon us in subtle ways by the culture in which we are raised“ (Herskovits cited in Cook, 1999).



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

Criticism on the view of moral absolutism

„We do not, therefore, have any reasons for holding the moral views that we do hold.“

„Accordingly, it is a mistake to think that our moral views are both

a) known by us to be true, and

b) apply to people of other cultures who do not share our moral views“ (Herskovits cited in Cook, 1999).



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

Consequences for the adoption of norms

The view of ethical relativism would reject the adoption of Western norms in developing countries, because

- **it denies the possibility of general validity of ethical judgements, and**
- **the knowledge about what is right and wrong for everyone everywhere.**



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

Consequences for the adoption of norms

**For the traditional ethical view of moral absolutism,
there would be no contradiction in view of the adoption
of Western norms to other cultures, since
it is grounded in true universal principles.**



CONCLUSIONS

- 1. The concept of animal welfare encompasses the physical and mental well-being of animals, it refers to subjective states in animals, and it includes also value judgements.**
- 2. Prevailing methodological traditions in science offer limited access to the concept of animal welfare. Additional study is required in the context of animals' subjective experience and the ethic-value-complex.**



CONCLUSIONS

3. Based on the sound argumentation of relativists the traditional ethical view of moral absolutism has to be rejected. The view of ethical relativism is considered to be more suitable to serve the claims of tropical animal agriculture.

4. The reflection highlights the need to reject of the transfer of Western animal welfare concerns and rather the need for encouraging the study of culture and society specific norms on animal welfare and the human treatment of animals.

Thank you very much for your attention!

