

Il benessere animale: un concetto ‘etico’ o ‘scientifico’? Un dibattito ancora attuale

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The ‘Ethical’ or ‘Scientific’ Nature of the Animal Welfare Concept: An Ongoing Debate

Abstract: The issue of *animal welfare* is the focus of a growing debate not only among experts, but also among the public. The ethical aspects involved into this debate are closely intertwined with the scientific ones. Actually, despite some prominent work of clarification, a conflict among scientists and ethicists regarding the very ‘nature’ of the animal welfare concept is still at the basis of decisions regarding its extent and application. This paper, starting from a reconstruction of the contemporary conception of animal welfare, discusses the history of this conflict, in the light of two contrasting attitudes: on one side, the scientific community for a long time continued to support a scientific, not value based, conception of animal welfare, on the other, ethical theories concerning animal welfare are still accused of ‘welfarism’ and avoid in depth confrontation with scientific data pertaining the welfare of animals.

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