

What do the animals think? Taking into account animal agency in animal rights

Following insights from studies in biology and ethology, more-than-human animals are increasingly recognized as active agents who not just act on instinct, but have their own perspective on life and relations with humans. This has implications for how we think about animal rights. In my talk I will use the example of the new Dutch animal law to explain why taking into account animal agency is important for animals and to explicate the relationship between animal agency and the broader project of animal rights. I then discuss problems with interpreting animal agency, and the underlying epistemological structures that cause these problems. Specifically, I argue that other animals suffer from epistemological injustice. The first step in overcoming these problems is to listen to the animals, and as a conclusion I offer some examples of practices and theoretical approaches that center their perspective as part of working towards justice for all.



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Eva Meijer is a philosopher and novelist. She currently works as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Amsterdam (NL), on the four-year research *project The politics of (not) eating animals* and is the chair of the Dutch study group for Animal Ethics. Recent publications include *Animal Languages* (John Murray 2019) and *When animals speak. Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York University Press 2019). Meijer wrote eleven books, fiction and non-fiction, that have been translated into eighteen languages.

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European Animal Rights Law Conference, The Woolf Institute (Westminster College site), 17-18 September 2021

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