The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/32376 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

Author: Vugts, Berrie
Title: The case against animal rights: a literary intervention
Issue Date: 2015-03-18
Stellingen / Propositions

behorend bij het proefschrift / with the PhD thesis

The Case against Animal Rights:
A Literary Intervention

doors / by Berrie Vugts

1. In literary studies as much as in contemporary animal rights discourse a thorough practical understanding of the difference between anthropomorphism and the trope of personification on the level of text is lacking, which cannot but lead to irresponsible legal demarcation decisions, both regarding the distinction between humans and animals and between animals themselves.

2. Animal rights discourse repeats the traditional human – animal opposition because it relies on an attitude to language that understands it in terms of “aboutness”, which is the most fundamental obstacle that precludes a consideration of the ethical position of animals.

3. Thinking through the ethical position of animals must be centred on carving out the position of a third that moves on a horizontal axis rather than on a vertical axis. This horizontal position may inspire a genuine engagement with the object of study instead of merely conveying a command of contemporary theory to then contribute to that theory and prolong it.

4. Scientific research into the capacities of animals is a good thing if it enables us to acknowledge and reduce the suffering of animals. It is a waste of money if it is aimed at a justification of demarcation.

5. The study of tropes in literary texts enables us to work out other modes of identification with animals than those we typically encounter in the legal and public sphere and, hence, can help us to get beyond the issues of cruelty and consciousness that dominate contemporary animal rights debate.

6. The campaign of the Dutch animal rights party for the legal prevention of unsedated slaughter of animals by religious groups is symptomatic for a misguided focus on equality that characterizes those who believe the demarcation problem can eventually be solved objectively.
7. As long as the elements of cruelty and dignity structure animal rights discourse the idea that the painless killing of animals would in some cases be acceptable will gain momentum, which absolves us from thinking through the ethical position of animals, a trend which bears an uncanny resemblance to replacing the electric chair with the needle.

8. Acting responsibly towards animals requires the acknowledgement of a fundamental un-decidability that lies at the heart of demarcation. Hence, the “anthropomofficer” would be a welcome expert to consult in animal rights cases.

9. The idea of animal rights is inextricably linked to a capitalistic logic of progress. As a result the utopian dimension of animal rights ideology, as well as its questionable philosophical and scientific underpinnings remain hidden. This happens at the cost of factory-farmed animals.

10. The recent trend of bringing in humans and animals within the sphere of materiality must be read as a new beginning.