

# Literary Bioethics

## Animality, Disability, and the Human

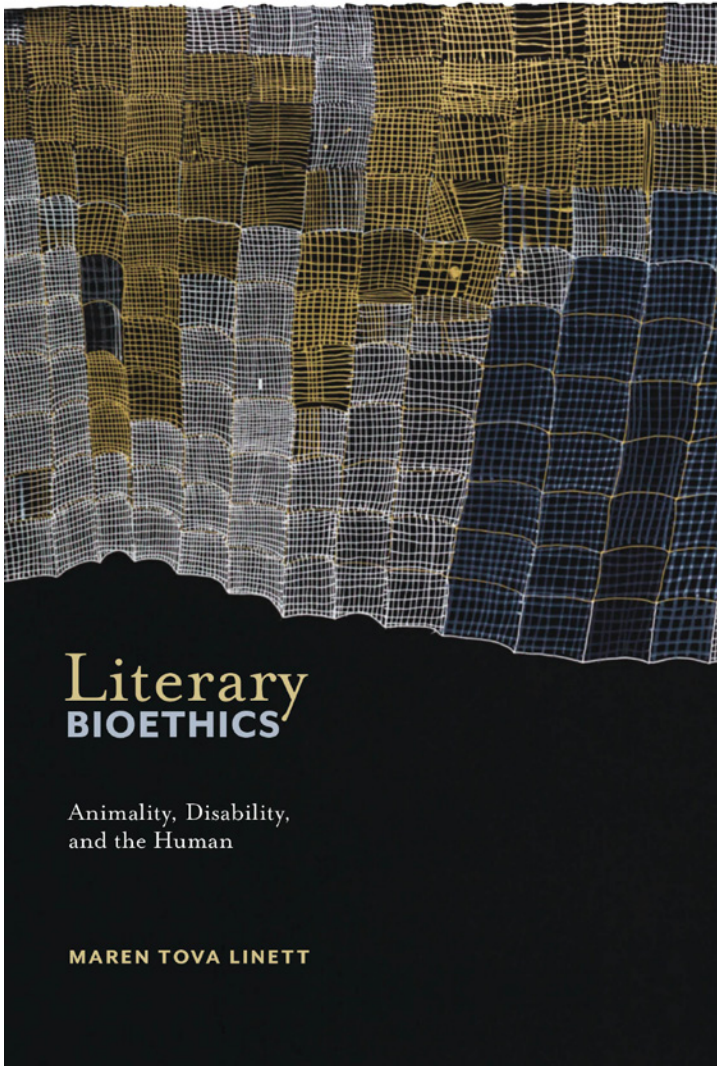
BY MAREN TOVA LINETT

### Instructor's Guide

Uses literature to understand and remake our ethics regarding nonhuman animals, old human beings, disabled human beings, and cloned posthumans

*Literary Bioethics* argues for literature as an untapped and essential site for the exploration of bioethics. Novels, Maren Tova Linett argues, present vividly imagined worlds in which certain values hold sway, casting new light onto those values; and the more plausible and well rendered readers find these imagined worlds, the more thoroughly we can evaluate the justice of those values. In an innovative set of readings, Linett thinks through the ethics of animal experimentation in H.G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, explores the elimination of aging in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, considers the valuation of disabled lives in Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*, and questions the principles of humane farming through reading Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, where cloned human beings are used systematically by the government as organ donors. By analyzing novels published at widely spaced intervals over the span of a century, Linett offers snapshots of how we confront questions of value. In some cases the fictions are swayed by dominant devaluations of nonnormative or nonhuman lives, while in other cases they confirm the value of such lives by resisting instrumental views of their worth—views that influence, explicitly or implicitly, many contemporary bioethical discussions, especially about the value of disabled and nonhuman lives.

*Literary Bioethics* grapples with the most fundamental questions of how we value different kinds of lives, and questions what those in power ought to be permitted to do with those lives as we gain unprecedented levels of technological prowess.



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Literary Studies

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## INTRODUCTION

The introduction sets up the method of literary bioethical analysis used in the study. It discusses differing points of view about the ethical power of reading literature, arguing that while reading literature is not always a process conducive to ethical growth, resistant reading methods allow us to view characters sympathetically even when the texts in which they appear seem to dismiss their subjectivity. Such resistant methods are encouraged by fiction itself because literature's particularity and imaginativeness, as Martha Nussbaum has shown, work against viewing people as abstract entities.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction then outlines varying ways of conceiving the category of the human and how we have differentiated ourselves from animals. It discusses the ways race, gender, and disability have been used to oust certain human beings from the category as well as the ways we lump all nonhuman beings into the category of "animal" so as to fortify human exceptionalism. It takes up Cary Wolfe's call to move past the ideology of humanism and embrace a more humble posthumanism, becoming aware of human beings' interconnectedness with nonhuman animals and many other forms of living and nonliving entities.<sup>2</sup> Taking in turn each of the four novels explored in this study, it briefly demonstrates how each text seems to view and question humanness.

This introductory chapter next advocates a closer alliance between animal studies and disability studies. It begins by acknowledging the difficulties in such an alliance, especially given the ableist rhetorical moves made by many philosophers who promote the consideration of animal interests. Making such an alliance, though difficult, will serve both efforts because much of human exceptionalism relies on belief in our superior capacities. As Sunaura Taylor argues, animals are also oppressed by ableism; <sup>3</sup> rooting out ableism, then, will benefit not only people whose worth is denigrated because of it, but also animals, who are exploited and killed because they do not (or we think they do not) possess certain capacities human beings have decided are necessary for rights. The discussion considers the question whether we should abandon the liberal justice tradition and its discourse on rights, or work to expand our conception of who has rights; it leans toward the latter option, proposing that we rethink the foundation for rights and the assumptions of their exclusively human relevance.

### ***Discussion Questions***

- What are the pros and cons of using novels as thought experiments to explore bioethical issues?
- How do you understand humanness? What is it that makes someone human? For example, does a human being need to have a certain bodily configuration? If we genetically engineered people to have 3 legs or 3 eyes, would they still be human? Does a human need to be conscious—e.g., does someone who is in what seems to be a permanent unresponsive state lose their humanness?
- Disabled people have had to fight very hard and long for their human and civil rights. Does making common cause with animal rights threaten the hard-won rights of disabled human beings? What are some pros and cons of making this alliance?

## CHAPTER ONE

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Chapter 1 combines animal studies and disability studies to explore the complicated negotiation with human exceptionalism woven within H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). The assumption that human beings are absolutely separate from other animals is the foundation of humanism. As Cary Wolfe asserts, “the human’ is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether.” Human exceptionalism reaches toward its apotheosis in “transhumanism,” an effort to “transcend the bonds of materiality and embodiment” through science and technology.<sup>4</sup> In Wells's time, the standard western view of the human as the unique pinnacle of creation was beginning to shift as Darwin's work encouraged people to understand themselves as related more closely to other animals.

H. G. Wells was an admiring student of Thomas Henry Huxley, the scientist known as “Darwin's bulldog” for his passionate support for and explication of Darwin's theories (T. H. Huxley was also the grandfather of Aldous Huxley). Having been trained in Darwin's theories and having studied zoology at the Normal School of Science and the University of London, Wells had no doubt that humans had evolved from an ape-like ancestor. But further questions were still up for debate: to what degree and for what reasons are human beings superior to other animals? Should we be classified in a category by ourselves or are we simply a type of ape? Wells called human beings “the culminating ape,” suggesting that to him we are at the same time an ape and higher than an ape: the zenith of apeness.

Both the existence of a gulf separating human beings from other animals and the moral consequences of the alleged gulf are questioned in Wells's early novel, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. There Wells leads us to consider the ontological and moral status of human beings by depicting vivisection experiments that make human beings out of animals. Our protagonist, Edward Prendick, is saved after a shipwreck by men engaged in the unusual task of bringing a puma to a remote island. Once on the island, Prendick hears the puma screaming for so long and with such agony that “it was as if all the pain in the world had found a voice.”<sup>5</sup> As he later learns, Dr. Moreau has been experimenting on animals—performing multiple surgeries without anesthesia on members of various species—in an effort to create rational human beings. Although his creatures do pass as human beings, Moreau is never satisfied with them. Readers soon realize that he is seeking a perfection not available in any actual human beings, much less in his vivisected creations.

*The Island of Doctor Moreau* raises important questions about animal experimentation, about what exactly makes Moreau's project wrong. It also raises broader questions about our status as human beings. The novel certainly questions

human exceptionalism. But in ways this chapter explores, it retains a sense of the superior value of humanness. Further, its questioning of human exceptionalism does not break down the human/animal binary so much as challenge “the idea that there is anything beyond animality.”<sup>6</sup> The novel suggests that Moreau’s project is doomed to fail not because it goes against nature to blend species and create chimeras or because it’s sacrilegious to create human beings, but because human beings are not ever the perfectly rational creatures Moreau imagines. We are imperfect; we are part beast; beastliness is humanity. To convey this imperfection, Wells uses rhetoric of disability. Disability stands in for all that us “wrong” with Moreau’s creations and with actual human beings. Through this use of disability as what he elsewhere calls “inaccuracy,” Wells reveals that he cannot completely abandon hope in Moreau’s transhumanist “curative imaginary.”

### **Discussion Questions**

- What common assumptions does Moreau's work (turning animals into human beings) overturn?
- How are disability and animality conceived in similar terms?
- Do you think it's theoretically possible to purge the animality out of human beings? If so, should we try to transcend our animal nature, our biology?
- Is it wrong to seek perfection in human beings (as Moreau hopes to make a “perfectly rational creature”)? When we gain the capacity, should we genetically engineer our children to be better, in whatever way we define that, than we are?
- How or in what circumstances might the ideology of cure be harmful?

### **Pairings and Lesson Plans**

- Have students read *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and discuss the features of Moreau’s work that make it ethically unacceptable. If he performed his surgeries with anesthesia and post-operative pain medication, would they be acceptable? If the surgeries would still be wrong even if they did not inflict pain, why would they?
- Have students read the first chapter of Eli Clare’s *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*. How does understanding our culture’s insistence on cure help us understand Moreau’s monomania?
- Have students read the first section (1.5 pages) of Nick Bostrom’s Transhumanism FAQ, entitled “What is Transhumanism?” online. In what ways is Moreau

similar to and different from a transhumanist? <https://nickbostrom.com/views/transhumanist.pdf>

## CHAPTER TWO

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Literary texts, as explained in the introduction, can serve as thought experiments that illuminate the ramifications of philosophical ideas.<sup>7</sup> This is especially true for novels that have already had wide-ranging effects on our understanding of ethical or political issues. As David Dunaway has pointed out, “The field of bioethics has already been conditioned by the mass reading of *Brave New World*.”<sup>8</sup> Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) has taught us much about the possible ramifications of cloning, biological predestination, psychological conditioning, and state control. One aspect of the novel that has been little discussed also bears bioethical consideration: the fact that the *Brave New World* is, in W. B. Yeats’s words, “no country for old men.” Chapter 2 takes a disability studies approach to aging by viewing *Brave New World* as a thought experiment that explores the value of old age. Reading the novel alongside the claim by influential bioethicist Ezekiel Emanuel that it would be best for everyone to die at around age 75, the chapter regards the absence of old people in the World State as an aspect of its dystopia.

In Huxley’s famous World State, the body’s natural changes are one of the great enemies. The society keeps everyone youthful by giving them “gonadal hormones, transfusion of young blood, magnesium salts.”<sup>9</sup> As a result, they stay strong and “young” into old age, or, to be more accurate, they do not age. In this society there is no place for human beings whose powers are declining. When people can no longer be rejuvenated, around age sixty, they are brought to Hospitals for the Dying, where their deaths proceed peacefully amid sensory distractions. The *Brave New World* makes literal what Hailee Gibbons describes as “compulsory youthfulness”: the ideological mandate in our own culture “for people to remain youthful and able-bodied throughout the life course, including in old age.”<sup>10</sup> The novel thereby raises the question, of what value is old age? Or to frame the question in more bioethical terms, how ought we to value old people? Would it be better if there weren’t any, if we conquered age to the extent that we enjoyed, as in the *Brave New World*, “youth almost unimpaired till sixty [or in our longer-lived society, say seventy-five or eighty], and then, crack! the end”?<sup>11</sup> Is Emanuel right when he argues that it would be best to die at around seventy-five, before one becomes “if not disabled, then faltering and declining”?<sup>12</sup> Or is there value to the stage of life in which some of our cherished abilities wane?

The first section of the chapter lays out the relationship the fictional society has constructed between one’s body and one’s life span, arguing that the persistent youth embraced by the society robs life of its narrative arc and thereby of an important aspect of its meaning. This claim relies on the idea of the life narrative as described by Alasdair MacIntyre and others.<sup>13</sup> The remaining two sections raise the question of whether the sacrifice of life narratives might be considered worthwhile, and show that the novel offers two reasons why it is not. First, by depicting the characters’ mistreatment



of Linda, the only person in the society who ages naturally, the text shows the loss of compassion that can result from knowing that one will never experience physical vulnerability or decline. Second, the novel exposes how the society's tight control of embodiment and its trivialization of bodily experience break apart the relationship between people's bodies and their emotions, a relationship ordinarily fostered not only by romantic love and the rearing of children, but also by the experience of bodily changes. While critics, and Huxley himself, view the novel as dystopian primarily because it portrays a totalitarian society where art, truth, and meaning are sacrificed to pleasure and distraction and where the ruled are programmed to parrot the values of their rulers, the novel also makes clear that the excision of old age has significant political, moral, and emotional costs.

### **Discussion Questions**

- Would it be best if people were healthy and strong right up until their deaths, even if that meant fewer life years? What could we lose, emotionally or philosophically, if that were the case?
- What tradeoffs are worthwhile to avoid periods of disability or frailty?
- How might we reconsider the meaning of independence, or change how we conceive of it, to accommodate the types of interdependence that old age makes more likely?
- If we eliminated the frailties of age, how would that affect attitudes toward and treatment of people with disabilities not caused by age?

### **Pairings and Lesson Plans**

- Have students read Ezekiel Emanuel's *Atlantic* essay "Why I Hope to Die at 75" for one class, and discuss it, especially looking at the ways it represents frailty and disability as solely loss, misery, and tragedy. Next, have students read *Brave New World* looking for attitudes towards bodily weakness, frailty, and imperfection. What does the fictional society suggest about bodies? Finally, have them read this chapter and discuss the issues it raises as part of a larger discussion about age, disability, and what makes for a well-lived life.
- If students need a very brief introduction to disability studies to counter attitudes like Emanuel's, have them watch Stella Young's 9-minute TED talk, "I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much." Additional options for introductory disability studies texts are Simi Linton's chapter "Reassigning Meaning," from *Claiming Disability*; Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's essay "Misfits: A Feminist

Materialist Disability Concept” (more suited to upper-level undergraduate or graduate classes); or, especially for students of philosophy, the introduction to Elizabeth Barnes’s book *The Minority Body*.

Other possible texts to pair with this chapter are the following:

- Margaret Gullette’s chapter, “Trapped in the New Time Machines” from her book *Aged by Culture*.
- Gilbert Meilaender’s chapter, “How Shall We Think About Aging?” from his book *Should We Live Forever?: The Ethical Ambiguities of Aging*. Caveat—Meilaender ultimately takes a religious approach to why aging is an important phase of life. Instructors who use this text can pose the question to students: Meilaender takes a religious approach to this question; if we take a secular approach, how do our answers to these questions, or our reasons for our answers, change?

## CHAPTER THREE

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Chapter 3 inserts Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960) into contemporary bioethical discussions about the value of disabled lives. This novel portrays the murder and simultaneous baptism of an intellectually disabled boy, Bishop, by his fourteen-year-old cousin Francis Tarwater—a murder that serves as the culmination of debates about Bishop's value staged in the novel. The boys' great-uncle, Mason Tarwater, who raised young Tarwater, sees Bishop as protected and valued by God and in need of baptism; Francis Tarwater sees his young cousin merely as a tool with which to control his future; and Bishop's father, George Rayber, sees his son as "useless" and tries to resist the love he feels for him. By presenting their disparate views, O'Connor dramatizes debates parallel to those being carried out in bioethical literature from a range of mainstream and disability studies orientations about the value of different kinds of human lives.

It is clear that O'Connor, a fervent Catholic, agrees in principle with Mason Tarwater that Bishop's soul is valuable to God and detests the views of Rayber, who thinks about human beings in instrumental terms. The Church holds that every human soul is equally valuable and objects to eugenics on the grounds that human beings must not, as a result of judging souls by human criteria, interfere with God's dominion over matters of reproduction. But as Christine Rosen points out, even in the 1930 papal decree about Christian marriage in which Pope Pius XI condemned eugenic *methods*, he did not clearly critique eugenic *aims*.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the pope conceded that "procuring the strength and health of the future child" is "not contrary to right reason" and did not question the idea that some offspring may be "defective."<sup>15</sup> O'Connor's representation of Bishop displays a similar complexity. Even though she attests to the value of Bishop's soul, her narrative ultimately implies a disturbingly eugenic view about disabled lives.

*The Violent Bear It Away* engages readers in questions of Bishop's worth that are directly relevant to contemporary bioethical considerations—for example, issues surrounding selective abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide for disabled people. The views of George Rayber bear comparison to the most objectionable views of Princeton philosopher Peter Singer, who holds that if we reject the metaphysical notion of the "sanctity of human life," it follows that we ought to judge disabled human lives as worth less than nondisabled human lives. Singer's rejection of "the sanctity of human life," then, leads him to argue that parents ought to be able to have babies with severe disabilities painlessly killed to make way for nondisabled babies they can reasonably hope to give birth to subsequently.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter compares and contrasts points of view about the worth of intellectually disabled human beings expressed by O'Connor's fictional characters with those expressed by Singer and other bioethicists, demonstrating a revealing convergence of views held by the secular Singer and the religious O'Connor. In staging

debates about Bishop's worth in a rationalistic world, O'Connor accepts eugenic positions she purports to critique. Although she died in 1964, before the first "test-tube baby" was born and well before the age of the human genome, the underlying question of value remains central to how we think about bioethical questions.

### **Discussion Questions**

- What makes a life worth living? The Nazis dismissed many kinds of disabled people as "life unworthy of life." Do all judgments that one life is worth less than another life lean toward fascism, or are there ways or circumstances whereby such judgments can be consistent with liberal democracy?
- What is more important in determining the worth of a human being—their decency or their intellectual capacities or some other quality?
- Do certain capacities make a life valuable, or are all lives equally valuable? If all lives are valuable, do we only mean human lives? If we only mean human lives, why? Does this return us to capacities (i.e., human lives are more valuable because we have higher capacities than nonhuman animals)? If we think all human lives are valuable because human beings are smarter or more emotionally complicated than other animals, what does that mean for people with intellectual disabilities? If we think that human beings are valuable without regard to capacities, are we being speciesist?

### **Pairings and Lesson Plans**

- After reading and discussing *The Violent Bear It Away*, have students read this chapter of *Literary Bioethics* and discuss how we determine the value of different kinds of lives, using the 3<sup>rd</sup> set of questions above.
- Over the next couple of classes, have students read Peter Singer, "Speciesism and Moral Status" and/or the section of *Practical Ethics* on infanticide; this section is set apart in Singer, *Writings on an Ethical Life* as a short chapter called "Justifying Infanticide." To counter his arguments, have students read Eva Kittay, "On the Margins of Moral Personhood" and/or "The Personal is Philosophical Is Political." The former is more philosophical, the latter more narrative in style.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is set in an alternative recent past: in 1990s Britain, the government runs a program to raise cloned human beings who will become organ donors in their young adulthood. The government raises the clones mostly in "vast government homes," but a few philanthropists have developed boarding school–like facilities to raise and educate the clones in good conditions. The novel takes place largely at one such home, Hailsham, a place initially very little distinguishable from an ordinary boarding school. Ishiguro's novel invites readers to read bioethically, to rethink our assumptions about humanness. The fictional clones are genetically, intellectually, and emotionally human beings; so the donation program is indisputably unethical. But the government homes where the cloned human beings live in "deplorable conditions" suggest factory farms, while Hailsham evokes a humane, organic farm, and these parallels raise issues of animal ethics. *Never Let Me Go* prompts readers to think about what it means to provide humane treatment to beings who are only valued instrumentally, and more broadly, about the ethics of humane farming.

Is it enough to have, as influential food writer Michal Pollan believes, a good life and a respectful death, even if that life is dramatically shortened? <sup>17</sup> Confronting the horror of a system in which human beings are raised to have good lives and respectful but early deaths may spur readers to consider why we think such a system for nonhuman animals is acceptable (assuming we agree that *factory farming* is shamefully unjust). In exploring how the fictional society handles its knowledge of the donation program, the novel provokes further questions about our society's ability to suppress our knowledge of the suffering of the animals we eat. Most generally, it prompts questions about how societies make certain beings "killable"—that is, how it becomes possible to kill without committing murder.<sup>18</sup>

Giorgio Agamben has discussed ways in which people can be made killable by being reduced to *zoë*, or "bare life." This category is opposed to *bios*, which refers to "the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group"—that is, life in a social context.<sup>19</sup> In his exploration of the ancient Roman category of the *homo sacer*, Agamben aligns that class of criminal, who is cast out from the community and who can be killed by anyone but not ritually sacrificed, with life that is bare of social meaning, seen as mere biological material. He compares this figure to the victims of Nazi concentration camps, arguing that the Nazis made their victims killable by first reducing them to bare life. It is initially tempting to think, as a couple of critics suggest, that the clones of *Never Let Me Go* are reduced to *zoë*. But what is so interesting about Hailsham is the way in which it does *not* reduce the clones to bare life but rather encourages them to enrich their lives by reading and studying, forming close relationships, developing their physical strength, and engaging in artistic pursuits. It is all the more surprising, then, that the students are nevertheless killable within Ishiguro's fictional world. And it is

because of this puzzling state of affairs that the novel is so illuminating about our relationship to nonhuman animals.

After all, if the clones are valuable enough to deserve good lives, as the Hailsham movement proposes, how is it that their lives are permitted to be drastically shortened for the good of others? To put the question another way, what grounds their right to *good* lives that somehow does not ground their right to *stay alive*? This discussion highlights the cognitive dissonance inherent in the fictional scenario—a dissonance ultimately fatal to the Hailsham experiment—and illuminates the ethical and logical contradictions of the humane meat movement.

### **Discussion Questions**

- Have students read *Never Let Me Go*. Ask them what exactly makes the novel's scenario wrong. Kant says never to use a human being as a means only. Why not? What is it about human beings that grants them the right to their natural life span? The right to determine the course of their lives?
- Does being born as a result of cloning rather than “natural” procreation make someone's life less valuable or of a lower moral status? If so, why? What about people born from IVF? In what morally relevant way is that different? What about future people born after being genetically engineered in vitro?
- If the death of each cloned person could help not two or three, but fifty non-cloned human beings, would that make the donation program ethically acceptable? What about 100? Is there *any* number of human beings whose lives might be saved by the death of each cloned person that would make the program acceptable?
- If the cloned people were nonhuman animals, such as pigs, would the program be ethically acceptable? Would we just need to make sure we gave the pigs good, if short, lives and try to prevent pain during their deaths?

### **Pairings and Lesson Plans**

- After reading and discussing *Never Let Me Go*, have students read this chapter of *Literary Bioethics* and ask them to consider why (and even whether) the scenario in the novel is more wrong than “humane” farming.
- Over the next couple of classes, have students read Chapter 17 of Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, “The Ethics of Eating Animals,” and Tom Regan's essay “The Case for Animal Rights,” included in *In Defense of Animals*,

ed. Peter Singer. Although both authors are concerned with animal welfare, the two essays/chapters disagree on the moral status of animals.

- o Stage a debate: ask students to bring notes to class on both sides of the issue, not knowing which side they will be assigned to argue. Divide students into two groups. Ask them to stage a debate on the question whether animals have the right not to be killed, as Regan suggests, or whether they can be killed as long as they have not had lives of suffering, as Pollan suggests. Each team will consult together and then present an opening statement, a few rebuttals (taking turns), and a closing statement. At the end of the debate, ask students which side they actually believe, whether or not they were on that team.

## EPILOGUE

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The epilogue begins by analyzing some of the ways the ideologies considered in the study—human exceptionalism, the “curative imaginary,” ageism, and ableism—play out in contemporary, real-world devaluation and exploitation of certain kinds of beings, in particular nonhuman beings, old human beings, and disabled human beings.

It then compares some of the logic shared between the old eugenics and the new “liberal eugenics” advocated by many contemporary philosophers. The eugenics movements of the early twentieth century aimed to improve the human species by encouraging the fertility of “fit” citizens and limiting “the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective,” as eugenicist and birth control advocate Margaret Sanger put it.<sup>20</sup> This movement was in the mainstream of science, public policy, and—after the 1927 Supreme Court *Buck v. Bell* decision upheld forced sterilization—law in the United States. As we get closer to being able to genetically engineer our offspring, many philosophers again believe we must intervene in the biology of the human species, usually with a primary or secondary goal of eradicating disability. The new “liberal eugenicists” believe that eugenics was harmful insofar as it was dictated by the state and, depending on the type of eugenics discussed, resulted in coerced sterilizations, incarceration, or murder. They, on the contrary, advocate for individual parents making decisions for their own children.

Market-driven, liberal eugenics, however, seems to have many of the same outcomes as the old eugenics (such as sterilizations of people deemed intellectually disabled). Moreover, there is a similar flaw in the arguments of old and new eugenicists. This flaw was identified by G. K. Chesterton in his 1922 book, *Eugenics and Other Evils*. Chesterton points out that eugenicists took some conditions (such as low wages for laborers) as “fixed points, like day and night, the conditions of human life” while taking other aspects of life (such as decisions to have children) as luxuries that should be changed to fit the “wage-market.”<sup>21</sup> Chesterton’s astute analysis uncovers the extent to which eugenicists unreflectively viewed some conditions as unchangeable constants and others as malleable material, intervention in which could ground social change.

The same logical flaw justifies current eugenic practices, such as selective abortion and genetic enhancement, that aim to improve the human species biologically. These practices take social problems to be “fixed points” and therefore approach them with biomedical tools. Liberal eugenicists would be encouraged, for example, by reports that births of babies with Down syndrome in Iceland have hit a record low, at only two babies per year.<sup>22</sup> But in their assumptions that by preventing people with Down syndrome from being born, Iceland is reducing suffering and increasing the overall happiness of the human species, these new eugenicists are making the same type of mistake Chesterton identifies. They are taking a complex social situation (that disabled people are “worse off” in some contexts and environments) as a hard and fast



“condition of human life.” They are ignoring the great extent to which the suffering of disabled people has its origins not in their bodies or minds, but in the social and environmental exclusion they experience.

The epilogue ends by suggesting that that efforts to secure human rights are not threatened by efforts to secure animal rights—that both aims should be pursued together.

### ***Discussion Questions***

- How can we counter the widespread and destructive devaluation of animal lives, of old lives, of disabled lives?
- Do the principles specified by advocates of the new, liberal eugenics suffice to remove the injustices of the old eugenics? Are there ways to make the new eugenics just?
- When (if?) we do have cloned people living among us, do you think we will devalue them or might we mere humans be devalued by them?
- Does it make sense to focus on the exploitation of animals when so many human beings still do not have their human and civil rights recognized and respected? How might the two aspects of justice be pursued together?

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

<sup>2</sup>See Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

<sup>3</sup>Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (New York: The New Press, 2017), p. 43.

<sup>4</sup>Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, xv.

<sup>5</sup>H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (Broadview edition, edited by Mason Harris. Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2009), p. 97.

<sup>6</sup>Aaron Gross and Anne Vallely, Eds, *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Peter Swirski, *Of Literature and Knowledge: Explorations in Narrative Thought Experiments, Evolution, and Game Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>David Dunaway, King. "Huxley and Human Cloning: Brave New World in the Twenty-First Century." *Aldous Huxley Annual 2* (2002), p. 176.

<sup>9</sup>Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*. 1932. (New York: HarperPerennial Modern Classics, 2006), p. 54.

<sup>10</sup>Hailee Gibbons, "Compulsory Youthfulness: Intersections of Ableism and Ageism in 'Successful Aging' Discourses." *Review of Disability Studies* 12.2–3 (2016), p. 71.

<sup>11</sup>Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 111.

<sup>12</sup>Emanuel, Ezekiel J. "Why I Hope to Die at 75." *Atlantic Magazine*, October 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/>.

<sup>13</sup>See MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd edition. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.

<sup>14</sup>Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 159.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>16</sup>Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 3rd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 163.

<sup>17</sup>Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*

(New York: Penguin Books, 2007), esp. chapter 17.

<sup>18</sup>Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 78.

<sup>19</sup>Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (New York: Brentano's, 1922), p. 25.

<sup>21</sup>G. K. Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils* (New York: Cassell and Company, 1922), p. 138.

<sup>22</sup>Julian Quinones and Arijeta Lajka. "What Kind of Society Do You Want to Live In?' Inside the Country Where Down Syndrome Is Disappearing." *CBS News: On Assignment*, August 14, 2017. Web.