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"What is an Animal? A Philosophical Reflection on the Possibility of a Moral Relationship with Animals"

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Contemporary ethical discourse on animals is influenced partly by a scientific and partly by an anthropomorphic understanding of them. Apparently, we have deprived ourselves of the possibility of a more profound acquaintance with them. In this contribution it is claimed that all ethical theories or statements regarding the moral significance of animals are grounded in an ontological assessment of the animal's way of being. In the course of history, several answers have been put forward to the question of what animals really and basically are. Three of them (namely the animal as a machine, an organism and a being that dwells in an—apparently—restricted world) are discussed. It is argued that the latter (Heideggerian) answer contains a valuable starting point for an ethical reflection on recent changes in the moral relationship between humans and animals.

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