

## Animal houses

James Rachels

**Zoos and Animal Rights: The Ethics of Keeping Animals.** By S. St C. Bostock. Routledge: 1993. Pp. 227. £35, \$59.95 (hbk); £10.99, \$15.95 (pbk).

THE debate about animal rights is nothing if not strident. Often it seems to be a shouting-match between activists who don't know very much about the practices they are criticizing and animal-users who are so intent on vindicating themselves that ethical questions cease to matter. *Zoos and Animal Rights* is a contribution to the debate of a much higher order. The author of this engaging book is himself a member of the profession whose practices are being scrutinized: he is the education officer at Glasgow Zoo in Scotland. But Bostock also has a doctorate in philosophy and possesses a keen understanding of the ethical problems that beset his line of work. Is zoo-keeping compatible with a proper regard for the rights and interests of the animals on display? In *Zoos and Animal Rights* this question gets a thorough and intelligent airing.

Of course, one would not expect Bostock to conclude that his job should be abolished, and he does not. He defends zoos on a number of grounds, as resources or conservation, education and science. He also argues that we should not object, on the grounds of animal welfare, to keeping animals in zoos if they would be worse off in the wild, and he describes in detail how various animals fare in both places. Along the way he provides a wealth of information about the history of zoos and about the hows and whys of contemporary animal-keeping. This background material alone makes *Zoos and Animal Rights* worth reading, even if one has no interest in the moral debate.

Bostock does not defend zoos by contending that animals have no rights. On the contrary, he ascribes extensive rights to them and argues that, in order to be morally defensible, zoos must operate compatibly with these rights. To his considerable credit he does not gloss over the suffering that zoo animals are sometimes made to endure. He knows, better than most of us, that many zoos are awful places. It is no wonder. Providing an appropriate environment for exotic animals requires not only a concern for their well-being but a great deal of esoteric

knowledge and considerable resources. Thus many zoos that seem like pleasant places to take the children on a Sunday afternoon are nevertheless intolerable from the point of view of animal welfare. But Bostock argues that it is unfair to condemn all zoos indiscriminately. There are bad zoos, he says, but there are good ones too.

The more radical critics are not likely to be placated, however, not only because conditions in bad zoos can be so appalling (and the bad zoos greatly outnumber the good ones) but also because the treatment that Bostock describes of animals even in good zoos may be deemed unacceptable. In his honest depiction of the history and practice of animal-keeping, he gives the critics a lot of ammunition. Moreover, despite his evident humanitarianism, Bostock is willing to tolerate practices that others find repugnant. He candidly notes that killing "food animals" to be con-

IMAGE  
UNAVAILABLE  
FOR COPYRIGHT  
REASONS

German engraving (c. 1870) of an Ancient Greek zoo.

sumed by carnivores is "regrettable but unavoidable". Others will conclude that it is better not to keep animals at all than to keep some at the cost of killing others. (Of course, this reasoning also implies that we should be vegetarians, as killing "food animals" for our own consumption is no different. But supporters of animal rights will have no trouble with such a conclusion.)

Nevertheless, if stridency can be avoided, people on both sides of the animal-rights debate can learn a great deal from *Zoos and Animal Rights*. Bostock has written a very good book, full of interesting information and moral argument that deserves to be taken seriously. It is too bad that there is no book about the use of animals in medical research that has the same virtues. If there were, it would be invaluable. □

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## Discovery and prevention

Vitaliy I. Goldanskii and Stanislav N. Rodionov

**In the Shadow of the Bomb: Physics and Arms Control.** By Sidney D. Drell. AIP: 1993. Pp. 358. \$30, £25. (Distributed outside the United Kingdom by Oxford University Press.)

SIDNEY Drell, the distinguished American scientist and public figure, describes his life as divided "between pursuing the dream of discovery and working to avoid the nightmare of a nuclear holocaust". He is known as a first-class high-energy physicist and a former deputy director of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center and president of the American Physical Society. Since the early 1960s he has been actively involved in national security, working for the US President's Science Advisory Committee, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the National Security Council and currently as a key member of the Stanford Center of International Security and Arms Control. His work on security issues has had a worldwide influence: President Mikhail Gorbachev held it in particular high regard.

All these various strands of Drell's career are represented in *In the Shadow of the Bomb*, a collection of articles written between 1974 and 1992, most of them in the 1980s. Because the book is intended for a wide audience, the three articles on elementary particles assume a semipopular style like that of *Scientific American*. Nevertheless, they succeed in providing a good description of the main results and problems in high-energy physics, and are splendid examples of how to make complicated science accessible to the layperson.

Here too are Drell's testimonials to his friends and colleagues (such as Wolfgang Panofsky and Victor Weisskopf), many of whom share his scientific, political and public views, as well as his passion for music. There is also a section devoted to Andrei Sakharov, a close friend and a fellow "insider in two spheres". There are many scientists today — and not only in the United States — who were responsible for the creation of weapons of mass destruction and who are now fighting for their total elimination. Sakharov was the archetypal nuclear scientist turned peace campaigner; his admirers will appreciate Drell's descriptions of his contributions to science, human rights and arms control.

Two articles reprinted in this book deserve special attention because they played a peculiar role in the vicissitudes of Sakharov's life. When "The Impact of a Public Constituency" and "The Moral