



# Elephants and Ethics: Toward a Morality of Coexistence

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The entwined history of humans and elephants is fascinating but often sad. People have used elephants as beasts of burden and war machines, slaughtered them for their ivory, exterminated them as threats to people and ecosystems, turned them into objects of entertainment at circuses, employed them as both curiosities and conservation ambassadors in zoos, and deified and honored them in religious rites. How have such actions affected these pachyderms? What ethical and moral imperatives should humans follow to ensure that elephants are treated with dignity and saved from extinction?

In *Elephants and Ethics*, Christen Wemmer and Catherine A. Christen assemble an international cohort of experts to review the history of human-elephant relations, discuss current issues of vital concern to elephant welfare, and assess the prospects for the ethical coexistence of both species.

Part I provides an overview of the vexatious human-elephant relationship, from the history of our interactions to understanding elephant intelligence and sense of self. It concludes with a discussion of the issues of stress, pain, and suffering as experienced by elephants in human care and the problems inherent in assessing these subjectively.

The second part explores how humans use elephants as tools and entertainment. It reviews domestic uses in Asia, examines the history and roles of elephants in zoos and circuses, and discusses the methods and ethics of training and caring for captive elephants.

In Part III the contributors examine the fragile and conflict-filled world of human-elephant interactions in the wild. Each chapter delves into a different angle of the "elephant problem"—the all-too-human problem of our growing populations taking over space that was historically the domain of these pachyderms. The chapters explore attempts to tame and "train" elephants in populous areas, the struggle over balancing species preservation while maintaining biodiversity in protected areas, and the conundrums posed by hunting, tourism, and human-elephant competition on rural land.

That the future health and survival of elephants is dependent on human actions is irrefutable. In addressing these issues from multiple perspectives, *Elephants and Ethics* promotes mutual understanding of the cultural, conservation, and economic difficulties at the root of the many troublesome human-elephant interactions and poses new questions about our responsibility toward these largest of land mammals.

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