Abstract - Kotzmann

Is the legal recognition of animal sentience reflective of changing animal ethics?

Some jurisdictions in Australia have followed, or appear to be following, the legal trend of recognising animal sentience in the law. This talk will explore the extent to which these legal reforms may be considered as attempts to dereify animals and as reflective of changing animal ethics. In this respect, reification refers to the legal treatment of animals as things rather than as living beings with their own personal qualities and individuality. It is contended that, although some provisions recognising animal sentience may be considered minor attempts to dereify animals, sentience provisions in general fail to provide a significant challenge to the legal status of animals as things. Nevertheless, there is some evidence to suggest that public animal ethics are changing.

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