

Animal Rights A Brief Introduction

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The greatness of a nation can be judged
by the way its animals are treated.
-Mahatma Gandhi

Thanks for Inviting Me!

- We're all cousins
- Our relationship to non-human animals
- Moral agenthood and our obligation to not do harm
- Ecological consistency
- Resources
- www.dilip.info/presentations/dkb-ar.htm

Cousins All

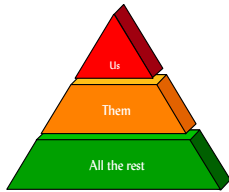
- The difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind. -Charles Darwin
- Genetics not so different – primates
- Human animals excel in abstract thought ... but whales excel in swimming, birds in flight, bats in radar, **Differences have no moral relevance**

What is our Relationship to non-human Animals?

- I am in favor of animal rights as well as I am in favor of animal rights as well as human rights. That is the way of a whole human being. - Abraham Lincoln
- Consumptive View
- Animal Welfare View
- Animal Rights View



Consumptive View



- Descartes: animals automata, feel nothing
- Creaky door - door doesn't feel pain
- People are different - and superior!



Animal Welfare View

- The question is not, Can they reason? nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?* --Jeremy Bentham
- Use animals (commodities) but “humanely”
- Animals are sentient and definitely feel pain!
- Kant: moral obligation for compassion; will improve our society



Animal Rights View



- If we cut up beasts simply because they cannot prevent us and because we are backing our own side in the struggle for existence, it is only logical to cut up imbeciles, criminals, enemies, or capitalists for the same reasons.* - C. S. Lewis
- Not commodities for humans
- Animals deserve to live according to their own natures



- Why do humans have "rights" but not non-humans? (speciesism)
- Why does the Animal Welfare Act recognize animal interests but allow their use for any human reason?
- How natural are zoos?
- “Humane slaughter”??
- Ahimsa (and common sense!) - natural life free from human exploitation, unnecessary pain and suffering



Moral Agents vs. Moral Patients

•Moral agent

- Has abstract conceptual ability to apply moral principles in making decisions
- Free will to act on morals
- Fair to hold accountable for acts

Ability to understand and respect others' rights

•Moral patient

- Lack these capabilities, so can't hold accountable
- But can suffer harm
- Must receive consideration of moral agents (responsibilities and obligations)

Ability to benefit from those rights



Our Moral Obligation to not Harm

•*This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee, would cause thee pain.*

-Mahabharata

•Child abuse is well accepted as "wrong"

- Child has *inherent value* - not an object to be used
- Child has right not to be harmed
- Child has no obligation to us - insufficient understanding to be a moral agent
- We do have moral obligation not to harm



•That's obvious; what's different about different species?

- Sentient
- Feel pleasure and pain
- Moral patients
- Implicit right not to be harmed

•Non-human animals also have inherent value and aren't commodities for us to do with as we wish



But What About Predation?

•*We have enslaved the rest of the animal creation, and have treated our distant cousins in fur and feathers so badly that beyond doubt, if they were able to formulate a religion, they would depict the Devil in human form.* -William Ralph Inge (1860-1954)

- Moral agent vs. patient
- Ecology
- Omnivore vs. carnivore



What About Human Rights?

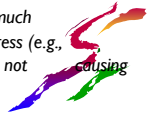
- *I care not much for a man's religion whose dog and cat are not the better for it.* -Abraham Lincoln
- What conflict?
- In practice, compassion works for both
- Not implying equal rights! (children don't have adult rights)
- Actually, many strong benefits for world hunger, health, environment ...



What About Animal Experimentation?

- *I am not interested to know whether vivisection produces results that are profitable for the human race or doesn't....The pain which it inflicts upon unconsenting animals is the basis of my hostility towards it, and it is to me insufficient justification.* -Mark Twain
- Premise: saves human lives / increases knowledge AND nonhumans are means to human ends
- Would a similar argument make human experimentation acceptable?

In practice, after huge numbers of animal sacrifices, not much applicable to humans – and many studies hindered progress (e.g., rhesus monkey model waylaid polio cure by 25y, smoking not causing lung cancer in animals delayed human warnings, ...)



Many other benefits

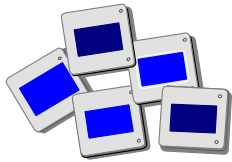
- # people who could be fed by grain & soybeans eaten by U.S. livestock: 1,300,000,000
- # pure vegetarians who can be fed on amount of land needed to feed one person consuming meat-based diet: 20
- Time world's petroleum reserves would last if all humans ate meat-centered diets: 13 years
- ... if all were vegetarians: 260 years
- Reduce our dependence on fossil fuels ... and conflict over resources



- Risk of death from heart attack by avg American man: 50%
 - Avg American vegetarian man: 15%
 - Avg American vegan man: 4%
- Reduce "meat", dairy, and eggs by 10% => reduce risk of heart attack by 9%
 - Reduce by 50% => reduce risk by 45%
 - Reduce by 100% => reduce risk by 90%
- Less than 1 out of every 1/4 million slaughtered animals tested for toxins



Summary



- Biological capabilities have no moral relevance
- We must apply moral agenthood to moral patients
- Inherent value - ahimsa
- Environment, health, world hunger, ...



Some Questions to Consider



- If it's good for the planet, the animals, world hunger, and human health, why not move toward vegetarianism?
- For folks who do eat meat, why raise animals in cruel confinement with little or no consideration for their pain and comfort?



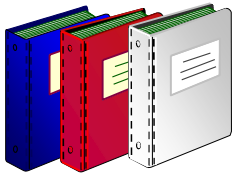
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- If we like the taste of meat, what about low-/no- fat and easy to cook analogues?
 - Why do we care for pets but eat other animals?
 - Why do some feel it's okay to eat pigs (high IQ, family bonds, etc.), but not dogs? Where does one draw the line?



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- How far does ahimsa and moral obligation to not harm go? Biology lab, veterinary school; driving; leather, silk, wool, milk??
 - Ahimsa: all life is sacred. How does this extend to plants? Should we eat root vegetables? How does ahimsa apply to cockroaches? Bacteria?
 - How about rocks? Environmental stewardship
 - Do we feel we have to draw lines? Should we question this?



Key References



- *The Case for Animal Rights*, Tom Regan (ISBN 0-520-05460-1)
- *In Defense of Animals*, Peter Singer (ISBN 0-06-097044-8)
- *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer (ISBN 0-380-71333-0, 2nd ed)



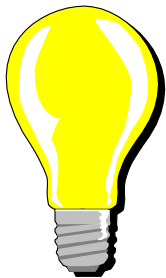
Organizations



- **PETA** 501 Front St, Norfolk, VA 23510, www.peta.org
- **Amer Anti-Vivisection Soc** Suite 204, Noble Plaza, 801 Old York Rd, Jenkintown, PA 19046, www.aavs.org
- **International Soc. for AR** 421 South State St, Clarks Summit, PA 18411, www.i-s-a-r.com
- **Beauty w/o Cruelty** 175 West 12th St #16G, NYC 10011
- **Carolina Animal Activists Together**, POB 6642, Raleigh, NC 27628, www.caat-nc.org
- **Culture and Animals Foundation**, 3509 Eden Croft Dr, Raleigh, NC 27612, www.cultureandanimals.org
- **Triangle Vegetarian Society**, POB 3364, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.trianglevegsociety.org



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