

Animals and Ethics Class Notes: Angus Taylor, *Animals & Ethics*, chs. 1-3

Rights theory (**deontology**)

Utilitarianism (equal consideration of interests)

Contractarianism (the moral community and rational, self-interested moral agents) (76-79)

Feminism (rationality, empathy, and the **ethic of care**)

Virtue ethics (*telos* and the doctrine of the mean)

Key Ideas: Ch. 1

- **Descartes, Kant, Darwin**
- Philosophers as the ‘midwives’ of the ‘animal rights movement’ (pros/cons?)
- Marjorie Spiegel, “The Dreaded Comparison” (again: pros/cons?)
- *The argument from marginal cases* (under which some claim that we must either include some animals in the moral community or else exclude some humans)

Ch. 2: From Aristotle to Darwin

- Views of animals throughout history, and throughout the world (from *Ahimsa* to the **great chain of being**)
- J.S. Mill: some pleasures are *qualitatively* superior to others (i.e., “like pearls before swine”)

Ch. 3: Do Animals Have Moral Rights?

- What is a **right**? (Is the following a good enough definition? “An entitlement to have, use, or do something...a claim *to* something and *against* someone, the recognition of which is called for by legal rules or, in the case of moral rights, by the principles of an enlightened conscience” (58))
- Do all rights require correlative **duties**, or vice versa? (not necessarily, many claim...)
- Against animals having rights
 - “animals lack **self-consciousness** and moral agency, they cannot be ends in themselves.” (Michael Leahy)
 - “Because animals have no capacity to make moral choices, they can have no rights” (Carl Cohen)
- Animals, says Henry Salt, “have moral rights *if humans do*” (63)
- “What distinguishes a natural right, like the right to life, from a non-natural right, like the right to collective bargaining, is that violation of the right to life would make it impossible for a person to flourish as a human being.”
- Tom Regan and *The Case for Animal Rights* – **Inherent** as against **instrumental value**: Regan “rejects the utilitarian idea that the interests of the individual must be subsumed under the aggregate of everyone’s interest...the aggregative nature of its moral calculus can lead to treating individuals in ways that deny their inherent value.”
- “According to Kant, human beings merit respect because they are autonomous. To be autonomous is, for Kant, to be rational and hence able to govern one’s life on the basis of an understanding of right and wrong...Regan allows a notion of autonomy that is considerably broader than Kant’s” (68)
- The economic fact, for R. G. Frey, is that “some human lives are more valuable than others. If human lives are not equal in value, we cannot claim, with Regan, that animal lives have the same value as normal human lives.”

Contractarian responses

- Narveson and Carruthers (“moral decadence”)
- A further response, by Louis Pojman: “once we accept the radical egalitarianism of Regan or Singer we are on the road to moral nihilism, to saying that because there are no relevant moral distinctions among beings we have no moral duties at all.” (78)
- Mark Rowlands, a Rawlsian case for animal rights (**the veil of ignorance** and the **original position**)

Feminist responses

- Midgley: is “right” even the right word? Should we instead be thinking in terms of **relations**?
- Nel Noddings: (81) on the limits of extending the ethic of care to other animals (reciprocity)
- Difference feminism, and Martha Nussbaum’s Aristotelian “capabilities approach” and the right to a ‘dignified existence’ (86)