

**Humane Society University  
Ethics and Animals  
Spring 2011**

**Lectures  
Discussion Questions  
Paper Assignments**

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*These lectures are intended to provide background to the readings, highlight important issues in the readings, introduce readings, and raise questions for each week.*

Week 0: Pre-Week: Registration, Getting Acquainted and Oriented, Etc.

[Week 1](#): Intro to Ethics, Intro to Logic and Intro to Ethics & Animals

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## Week 1: Intro to Ethics, Intro to Logic and Intro to Ethics & Animals

*Note: this first lecture is longer than the rest.*

### **Overview:**

Discussions of animal ethics are more fruitful when approached after an exposure to *general* thinking about ethics and methods of moral argument analysis. Theories of animal ethics are typically extensions or modifications of theories developed for addressing more familiar (and often less controversial) questions about human-to-human ethics. Therefore it is important to be familiar with these theories and methods. These online readings will introduce students to the more influential moral theories and methods of moral argument analysis, and we will read the introductions to our texts on animal ethics.

### **Moral Questions**

In this course we will attempt to reasonably answer moral or ethical questions concerning the treatment and use of animals.<sup>1</sup> Some of these questions are general<sup>2</sup>, e.g.:

- Morally, how should we treat animals?
- Which uses of animals, if any, are morally permissible, and which are morally wrong?
- Do we have any moral obligations toward any animals? What is the *extent* of these obligations? *Why* do we have these obligations (if we do)? What is it *about* (various kinds of) animals that *makes* them such that how we treat them matters morally?
- Are there different obligations toward different animals? Might certain uses of some animals be morally permissible, whereas using other animals in similar ways would be wrong? (E.g., might some experiments be wrong if done on chimpanzees, whereas morally permissible, or perhaps “less wrong,” if done on mice?)
- Morally, should we be concerned only with certain kinds of animals, e.g., those who are conscious and have feelings? What about insects? What about unicellular organisms? On what basis do we decide?

Other questions deal with specific uses of animals, e.g.:

- Is it morally permissible to trap and skin animals for their fur in our society, where alternatives to fur coats are readily available? If we lived somewhere where there were no such “alternative” means to keep warm would that make a difference to the morality of using animals for their fur?
- Is it morally permissible to raise and kill animals to eat them in our society, where nutritious alternatives to animal foods are readily available? If we were somewhere where there were inadequate non-animal foods would that make a difference to the morality of using animals for food?

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘ethical’ and ‘moral’ will be used synonymously throughout this course.

<sup>2</sup> These questions might be described as being about the “moral status” of animals. I will not use this term however, since it is better to just ask straightforward questions about whether some treatment or use is morally permissible or not (and why), whether some treating some being (e.g., some animal) one way would be better or worse than treating another being (e.g., some human being) in a similar way, and so on.

- If it could be known, with certainty, that some experiments on animals would save the lives of many human beings (or even just one?), would these experiments be morally permissible? If there was only a slight chance that these experiments would lead to such benefits, or no chance, would this make a difference to the morality of these experiments?

While everyone has answers to these questions, we are not interested in anyone's *mere* "opinions" or "feelings" about how they should be answered. We want to find out which answers are backed by the *best moral reasons* or *strongest moral arguments*, i.e., the arguments that we have the strongest reasons to believe are sound. We want to know *why* we should accept some answers to these questions and reject others. To do this we will attempt to improve our skills at reasoning morally.<sup>3</sup>

### **What the Question Is Not: Not "Morally Right," but Morally Permissible and/or Morally Obligatory**

One might think that the core questions in animal ethics are whether various uses of animals are *morally right* or *morally wrong*. This is not quite correct. Effective moral reasoning requires the clear and precise uses of words. Thus, when a word is ambiguous (i.e., has more than one meaning), we must identify these meanings and make it clear what meaning we are using. That way everyone knows what exact thought we have in mind when we make claims using that word: we're on the same page and can communicate effectively. And we can think about whether what we are saying is true or false and supported (or *supportable*) by reasons and evidence or not.

This applies to the use of the word 'right,' as in *morally right*, because the word is ambiguous. Examples show this. Suppose you saved a drowning baby by pulling her out of bathtub. This was easy for you, not risky, and had you not been there the baby surely would have drown. If someone says, "Your saving that baby was morally right," this person probably means to say that your saving that baby, in these circumstances, was *morally obligatory*, *morally required*, or a moral *duty*: if you had *not* saved the baby, you would have done something *wrong* or *morally impermissible*.<sup>4</sup>

Consider another example. Although you are a person of average income, you send \$1000 a month to famine relief organizations to help starving children. Someone says, "Your making these donations is morally right." Here this person probably does *not* mean to say your making these donations are *morally obligatory*, *morally required*, or a moral *duty*. Unlike the

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<sup>3</sup> We will challenge our own answers to questions like these above and arguments in favor of them by considering contrary answers to these questions (i.e., answers that contradict your, and perhaps *our*, answers). If we carefully identify evaluate the arguments given by people we disagree with, we may find that their arguments are stronger than our own and so we should change our minds! Another possibility is that their beliefs about how animals should be treated should change and, perhaps, their behaviors toward animals should change also.

Although change – in belief, attitude, feeling, action and policy – is a focus of this course, it is not about persuasion in the way that a course on advertising, marketing, propaganda, and public / media relations might be. It is about persuasion, however, in that we are trying to identify which views people *should* be persuaded to accept, if we wish to think critically and carefully about what we morally ought to do. *If* we are capable of such critical moral thinking (and, if so, *how* this is done) will be discussed below and in the readings on logic and argument analysis and practiced throughout the course.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, if story is that you didn't save the baby because you *can't* because you are paralyzed, or because you were already maxed-out saving 12 other drowning babies, then you weren't morally obligated to save this baby.

bathhtub case, the common (but perhaps mistaken<sup>5</sup>) view is that your *not* donating would *not* be wrong or morally *impermissible*. So, this person probably means to be saying, at least, that what you do is *morally permissible*, i.e., *not wrong* or *not* morally *impermissible*. She might also mean that it is not merely permissible, but more positively good beyond that, but definitely not *morally obligatory*.

With these distinctions in mind, we can stop using an ambiguous word – “morally right” – and instead use these more precise terms categories for morally evaluating actions:

1. **morally permissible**: morally OK; *not* morally wrong; *not* morally *impermissible*; “OK to do”;
2. **morally obligatory**: morally required; a moral duty; *impermissible* to not do it; wrong to not do it; “gotta do it”;
3. **morally impermissible**: morally wrong; not permissible; obligatory to not do it; a duty to not do it.

We might also add a category “between” the permissible and the obligatory for actions that are positively good, virtuous or admirable, and thereby morally permissible, but not obligatory: e.g., some argue that vegetarianism is in that category, and if this is correct then arguments for the conclusion that vegetarianism is morally obligatory are unsound. This category might be described as the “supererogatory,” meaning beyond the call of duty or what’s morally required.

Thus, the core questions in ethics and animals are what moral categories specific uses of animals fall into – morally permissible, morally obligatory, or morally impermissible or wrong – and, *most importantly*, *why*. Again, the *reasons* given for why we should think, e.g., that some use is permissible and another use is wrong, or whatever conclusions anyone advocates, are our main interest.

### **What the Questions Also Is Not: Not (Necessarily) Animal “Rights”**

A second possible interpretation of the core questions of animal ethics is that they are about whether animals have “rights.” On this view, to ask whether various uses of animals are morally permissible or not is *just to ask* whether animals have rights or not. It is very common for these two notions to be equated, but they shouldn’t be, for a variety of reasons.

### **Legal Rights: Not the Issue**

First, the term ‘rights’ is multiply ambiguous. One kind of rights are *legal* rights. Legal rights are such that, in theory, if they are violated, somebody can be punished by the criminal system. Legal rights are “man made” and vary by time and location: the legal rights women have in the US differ from the legal rights women have in, e.g., Afghanistan. To figure out what legal rights

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps, however, “common sense” is mistaken and affluent people are morally obligated to make donations like these. For arguments for this conclusion, see (among other sources) Peter Singer’s “Famine, Affluence and Morality” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1972), pp. 229-243 (widely available online, e.g., at <http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/1972----.htm>) and his “The Singer Solution to World Poverty,” *New York Times magazine*, September 5, 1999; at <http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/19990905mag-poverty-singer.html>

animals have is often easy: just check the law books. There you would find that there are few laws that protect animals from harm: they have few legal rights.

Legal rights are not of much interest to us as ethicists, however, because what's legally permitted need not be morally permissible: e.g., slaveholding in the US South hundreds of years ago was legal yet immoral; and what's legally required may not be morally permissible: e.g., the legal requirement that drugs be "tested" on animals might be an immoral requirement. Although legal standards can be sometimes seen as a highly imperfect expression of a society's general views on what's moral and immoral, we will generally not discuss the law beyond our readings' occasionally observations that animals have few legal rights.

### **Moral Rights: Not *Necessarily* the Issue**

A second possible kind of rights are *moral* rights. What are moral rights? Later lectures will address some common misunderstandings and resulting confusions about moral rights, but the most important reason to not equate the questions of what uses of animals are permissible and whether animals have moral rights is this: although this might sound odd to some people, it's possible that many uses of animals are wrong *even though* animals have *no* moral rights. Various uses of animals might be wrong for *other* moral reasons besides their having rights, so *even if animals have no rights, it doesn't immediately follow that harmful animal use is morally permissible*. Equating the two issues conceals this possibility.

Again, the core questions in ethics and animals are what moral categories we should think specific uses of animals fall into – morally permissible, morally obligatory, or morally impermissible/wrong – and the reasons why we should think this. Thinking in terms of moral rights can make the issues more confusing than they have to be.

### **Some Basic Concepts about Arguments: Introduction to Logic**

To attempt to try to figure out which moral views about animals are correct, we will try to find out which views are supported by the best reasons. To do this, will identify and evaluate *arguments*. The Rachels ("Some Basic Points About Arguments")

(<http://sites.google.com/site/nobisphilosophy/arguments.pdf>) and Pryor

(<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html>) readings give excellent overviews of what arguments are and what makes arguments good and bad.

An **argument** is a conclusion that is supported by premises. The premises should lead to the conclusion, forming a "chain" of reasoning: this makes the argument "**logically valid**" (a technical term with a precise meaning that differs from how non-philosophers often might use the term). In a valid argument, since the premises lead to the conclusion (and this chain of reasoning is clearly identifiable), *if* the premises are true, *then* the conclusion must be true as well. When an argument is valid and the premises are true, then the argument is **sound** (and the conclusion is thereby true, given the definition of "valid" and the fact that the premises are true). If the argument is valid and, with good reasons, you think the premises are true, then you should think the argument is sound. We want to find sound arguments and reject unsound ones.

Our main concern is finding the arguments, understanding what exact conclusion(s) is being defended and what exact premises are given in its favor. We have to figure out whether the premises lead to the conclusion, i.e., is valid, or if we can "tweak" the argument by adding

premises to make it valid. We then try to figure out if it is sound. Here are three rules for carefully identifying arguments:

1. Make the stated conclusion(s) and premise(s) *precise* in quantity: is something said to be true (or false) of *all* things (or people, or animals, etc.), or just *some* of them (and if so, which ones?)?
2. Clarify the intended meaning(s) of unclear or ambiguous words in conclusions or premises.
3. State (any) *assumed* premises so that the *complete* pattern of reasoning in an argument is displayed and it is clear how the stated premise(s) logically leads to the conclusion.

Other important logical tools are that of *necessary condition(s)*, *sufficient condition(s)*, *necessary and sufficient condition(s)*, and *counterexamples*. (See Pryor especially). The importance of these concepts for animal ethics will be apparent as we work through the issues.

### **Moral Principles as Premises: Introduction to Ethics**

Moral arguments often have a *moral principle* as a premise. We will attempt to figure out if these premises are true. Moral principles often assert that an action having some feature(s) is a *sufficient* condition(s) for that action being morally wrong, permissible, or whatever. E.g., here are two *possible* moral principles:

- (A) *If* an action causes pain, *then* that action is morally wrong.
- (B) *If* an action benefits someone and harms nobody, *then* that action is morally permissible.

(Can principle A can be refuted, i.e., shown false, by *counterexamples*, an exception to the proposed rule? Is principle B true? How would we try to figure that out?). Moral principles might also claim that an action having some feature(s) is a *necessary* condition for that action being morally wrong, permissible, or whatever, e.g.:

- (C) A being has a “right to not suffer needlessly” *only if* that being is capable of reasoning morally.

(Can principle C be refuted, i.e., shown false, by counterexamples?). Moral principles are often justified by appeal to *moral* or *ethical theories*. A moral theory attempts to answer these kinds of questions:

- What *makes* morally right actions right and wrong actions wrong? (Or, what *makes* permissible acts permissible, obligatory actions obligatory, etc?)? What is it *about* actions that gives them the moral status (permissible, obligatory, etc.) that they have?
- What’s the basic, fundamental, essential difference(s) between permissible and impermissible actions? What features of actions mark that divide?
- What are the *necessary and sufficient conditions* for an action being permissible, obligatory, etc.?

Before looking at influential theories developed and refined by philosophers, it is useful to start by developing your own moral theory (or theories). Here is one method to do that:

Make a chart with three columns. In the left column, make a long list of actions (and we can use character traits too, if you'd like) that you think most people would think are *obviously wrong or bad*. In the right column, make a long list of actions or character traits that you think most people would think are *obviously morally permissible, obligatory or otherwise good*. In the middle, list any actions that come to mind but don't fall into either category. Share your list with others to compare, change, revise, etc.<sup>6</sup>

Now ask, what is it *about* the wrong actions on your list that *makes* them wrong? *Why* are they on the "wrong" list? What is it about the right/good actions that *makes* them right or good? Why do they belong on that list? What moral hypotheses best explains this? Your answers here could result in your revising your initial judgments, if you see that some emerging moral principles are inconsistent with any initial judgment.

A complementary approach is this:

Describe how animals are treated in, e.g., the food industry, the fur industry, in experimentation, etc. Would treating (any?) human beings in these ways be morally permissible, or would this be wrong? What moral *hypotheses* – about what makes wrong actions wrong – *best explain* why this is so, e.g., why it would be wrong to treat humans in these ways?

These exercises might result in you developing basic theories that are similar to many influential moral theories that have been developed over the last few centuries, if not longer. Thinking for yourself can lead to many of the same moral insights many of the philosophical "greats" have had.

Rachels and Regan discuss the (arguably) more plausible moral theories last, after they discuss and sometimes argue against the (arguably) inferior theories. Rachels is here: <https://sites.google.com/site/ethicsandanimals/rachels-intro-to-ethics.pdf> Regan is here: [https://sites.google.com/site/ethicsandanimals/regancase\\_for\\_animal\\_rights.pdf](https://sites.google.com/site/ethicsandanimals/regancase_for_animal_rights.pdf) Here are the theories they discuss:

- **Relativism & Moral Skepticism** (Rachels, "Short Introduction" 2-3; Rachels "Basic Points About Arguments," 22-27)
  - Rachels argues relativism and skepticism are false.
- **Divine Command Theory** (Rachels "Short Introduction" 3-5)
  - Rachels argues the divine command theory is false and even that religious believers should not accept it. (See below on religion and ethics).
- **Virtue Theory** (Rachels, "Short Introduction" 5-6); "Cruelty-Kindness" (Regan, 217)
  - Regan argues that a kind of virtue theory, which he calls the cruelty-kindness view, is mistaken.

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<sup>6</sup> Some possibilities: It is wrong to mistreat a child, to humiliate someone, to torment an animal. To think only of yourself, to steal, to lie, to break promises. Torturing a child. Starving someone to death. Humiliating an invalid in a nursing home. On the positive side: it is right to be considerate and respectful of others, to be charitable and generous.

- **Natural Law** (Rachels, “Short Introduction” 6-8). Not a very popular theory any more outside of some Catholic contexts.
- **Contractarianism / the Social Contract** (Rachels “Short Introduction” 8-10); Regan (214-216). (Regan also discusses Rawls’ improved version of contractarianism; Mark Rowlands modifies this theory to argue in defense of animals.)
  - Regan argues that contractarianisms are false.
- **Utilitarianism** (Rachels “Short Introduction” 11-14; Regan 217-220)
  - Regan argues that utilitarianism is false.
- **Immanuel Kant’s Ethics** (“Short Introduction” 17-19); **“The Rights View”** (Regan 220-223), which is developed out of a modification of Kant’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Categorical Imperative; Regan has a broader view of who should be treated as “ends in themselves.”
- **Altruistic Ethical Theories** (Rachels “Short Introduction” 10-11): a broad *category* of ethical theories; they contrast with “egoistic” theories where the only intrinsic moral concern is for yourself and how your actions affect your own interest.
- **Ethical Theories that Require Impartiality** (Rachels “Short Introduction” 14-16): a broad *category* of ethical theories; contrasts with “partialist” theories that allow special preference to family and friends.

Animal advocates typically argue that the moral theory(s) that best explain how we ought to treat human beings (especially vulnerable human beings: the very young and very old) have positive implications for animals. Whether their arguments are sound, we shall see.

### Religion and Ethics: A Brief Comment

Ethical issues are sometimes addressed in the context of religion; indeed it’s often assumed that the two are inseparable. For this course we will reject this assumption, largely for the reasons that Rachels presents, following Socrates. Their reasoning is this:

If some religious text, authority, or even God makes a moral judgment (e.g., about whether some use of animals is morally permissible or not, or any other moral topic), then either there are *reasons* that justify that judgment or not. If there are no reasons supporting that judgment, then it is arbitrary and should not be accepted. If there *are* reasons, however, then those reasons are what justify the judgment, not the fact that some authority says so, and we should be able to identify and evaluate those reasons directly.

In sum, “Because I said so!” is not a good reason to believe something, unless whatever is said is supported by reasons. Nevertheless, there are many religiously-motivated animal advocacy organizations and thinkers and the suggested readings and web pages reference them.

### Introduction to Animal Ethics

Finally, we will read the prefaces and introductions to our main texts. They are all interesting; Singer’s is especially important to the historic development of the animal movement. We can use Regan’s “cat case” and its variants as a unifying theme for inquiry. We will try to determine which broad view below is supported by the best moral reasons:

- A. Any (or almost any) use of animals is morally permissible; there are no moral obligations to animals.
- B. Seriously harming animals (e.g., causing them pain and suffering, killing them, etc.) is morally permissible provided they are housed in comfortable cages.
- C. Seriously harming animals is permissible provided they are housed in comfortable cages, treated gently and killed painlessly.
- D. Seriously harming animals is typically morally wrong, *even if* they are housed in comfortable cages, treated gently and killed painlessly.

### Discussion Questions

1. For many ethical issues, a good place to start is to reflect on “common views” about the issues. Suppose you surveyed a range of people about the moral questions that these lectures open with. What are some of the most common answers that would be given? What *reasons* would you often hear in favor of these answers? Are these reasons generally good reasons or not? Why?
2. Based on the readings about logic and arguments, explain (i) what an argument is, (ii) what makes arguments good or bad (e.g., explain the concepts of validity and soundness), and (iii) what one does to try to show that an argument is sound or unsound (e.g., explain the concept of a counterexample). If you have any other questions about what arguments are and how to identify and evaluate them, ask them here. We will be practicing identifying and evaluating arguments throughout the course.
3. Complete the moral theory building exercises above. What does your moral theory (or theories) look like? According to your theory(s), what is it about wrong actions that seem to *make* them wrong, and what is it about morally permissible / obligatory / good actions that *make* them like that? What follows from your theory (or theories) for how human beings should be treated? What follows for animals (and *which* animals)?
4. Which moral theory (or theories) that Rachels and Regan discuss seem best, i.e., most likely to identify the (approximate) truth about the nature of morally permissible and obligatory actions? Which seem worst, i.e., false? Why?
5. What observations do you have about the Prefaces, Introductions and Prologues to each of the books on animal ethics? What strikes you as interesting, provocative, controversial and otherwise worthy of comment and reflection?
6. Free for all discussion area: please ask anything about the readings, comment on them, or raise any other issues, questions or concerns here.

*Of course, always feel free to raise any other questions, observations, criticisms and any other responses to the week's readings and issues.*

Papers start week 3.

## Week 2: What Are (Some) Animals Like? Animal Minds and Harms to Animals

### Overview:

If any animals have minds, and thus are conscious, then they can be harmed, and thus how they are treated raises moral issues. And, arguably, there are moral obligations towards animals *only if* they have minds, so questions about animal ethics very much depend on what animals are like. This week we will get an overview of the scientific and philosophical literature on whether any animals are conscious, whether any are sentient (i.e., capable of sensation or feeling, especially of pleasures and pains), and so whether various species of animals have minds and, if so, what their mental, psychological and/or emotional lives might be like. We will discuss how anyone could know or reasonably believe some claim about animals' minds.

### Being Specific About Species

In the first lecture on logic, I made these two suggestions about identifying arguments:

- Make the stated conclusion(s) and premise(s) *precise* in quantity: is something said to be true (or false) of *all* things (or people, or animals, etc.), or just *some* of them (and if so, which ones)?
- Clarify the intended meaning(s) of unclear or ambiguous words in conclusions or premises.

These suggestions are relevant to thinking about animals' minds since the category of "animal" is extremely broad: "animals" range from unicellular organisms, insects, invertebrates, vertebrates, birds, and to mammals of different kinds, including primates (like human beings). Since there are millions of species of animals, so when investigate whether animals' have minds, the natural questions are, "*Which* animals?" or, "What do you *mean* by 'animals'? Which animals are you referring to?"

Sometimes we forget to notice that these same questions should often be asked about human beings' mental lives. The mental lives of, e.g., newborn babies, five year olds, "normal" adults, cognitively disabled individuals, and Alzheimer's patients surely differ greatly. So if someone says that (all) animals don't have minds like human beings' minds, we should ask *which* human beings, since many some, if not, many animals have mental lives comparable to, if not richer than, many human beings' minds. That's a possibility: whether we should think its true, of course, depends on what the research shows about the varieties of animals' and humans' minds and mental capacities.

Our readings primarily focus on mammals and birds, although there is some discussion of fish, invertebrates (such as octopi) and even some research on insects. But, again, it seems likely the minds of different mammals (if any have minds) are also different: e.g., a mouse's mental life is likely quite different from a chimpanzee's (especially if that chimp has been taught sign language). Additional research on different kinds of animals' minds will be discussed in later sections of the course: e.g., research on the minds of chickens, cows and pigs will be discussed in the sections on animal agriculture; rats and mice, cats, dogs and primates in the sections of animal experimentation, and so on.

## How Do We Know? Arguments from Analogy & Inference to the Best Scientific Explanation

*Epistemology* is an area of philosophy that asks how we *know* things and what it is for a belief to be *reasonable* and supported by good *evidence*. How might we *know* that any animals have minds, or reasonably believe any such claims? We can call this question “The Epistemological Problem of Animal Minds.”

Before we think about this (hard) problem, it’s worthwhile to mention that philosophers (and some psychologists and neuroscientists) worry about a more general (hard) problem called “The Epistemological Problem of Other Minds” regarding *humans’ minds*. The problem is that each of us only has “direct access” to our own perceptions, thoughts and feelings: we cannot directly “see” that anyone else is conscious and has a mind. All we see is external, overt behavior (including speech) and, presumably, somehow *infer* from this behavior that another individual has thoughts, feelings and perceptions somewhat like our own. Perhaps this inference is not consciously made, but how else could we know that other *people* have minds?!

Believe it or not, this question has troubled philosophers for millennia and there is no widely accepted answer. Many philosophers argue, however, that we know that other people have minds either by *reasoning by analogy* or by *reasoning from the best explanation of some phenomena*, in this case the overt behavior.

To reason by analogy is, most simply, to reason like this:

- Thing 1 has these characteristics *a*, *b*, and *c*;
- Thing 2 has characteristics *a* & *b*;
- Thing 2 is *relevantly similar* to Thing 1;
- *Therefore, probably* Thing 2 has characteristic *c* too.

Or, even more simply: “These two things are similar in the relevant ways, so therefore what is true of one is probably true of the other.” The strength of an argument from analogy depends on how similar to two things are: the more similar, the stronger the analogy, obviously, and more likely the conclusion is to be true.

To respond to the “Problem of other Minds,” someone might reason, “I behave these ways, have this kind of biology, and *I have a mind*. Other people behave in similar ways and have similar biology. *Therefore*, they probably have minds too.” It’s important to observe that we apparently often use the same kind of kind of reasoning about animals’ minds, as our authors demonstrate.

The second common pattern of reasoning about minds is an argument from the best explanation:

- There is some event that requires explanation.
- Explanation or hypothesis *E best explains* that event (i.e., is a better explanation than other candidate explanations in that it makes sense of more of the data/observations, allows predication, is simpler, fits with pre-existing knowledge, etc. )
- *Therefore, probably* *E*, and what’s entailed by *E*, are true.

This pattern of reasoning is often applied to animal behavior: an animal does something (e.g., reacts in some interesting way to new surroundings); we try to figure out if this reaction would be better explained on the hypothesis that (a) this animal is a mindless automaton or (b) this animal has a conscious mind (or some other explanation, perhaps with greater details than [b]). How this reasoning will work out *very much* depends on the details of the case, but it's important to note that we use this pattern of reasoning to investigate both humans' and animals' minds.

### **A Source of Doubts: Necessary Conditions for Having a Mind**

Many who argue (or have argued, in the case of historical figures) that animals don't have minds often claim that there is (or are) *necessary condition(s)* for having a mind, animals lack that necessary condition, and therefore they are mindless. So, some have claimed that a being has a mind *only if*, e.g., that being has language, and argued that animals are mindless since they can't speak. Critics tend to challenge these claims by either arguing that that (some) animals meet this necessary condition, or by arguing that it's false that this condition is a necessary one: a being can have a mind even if it lacks this condition. They also tend to point out that that many such principles imply that human infants are mindless, which seems to be false (and perhaps must be false, since such infants do learn language, and that can happen only if they have minds already, before having language).

These are a few central concepts to keep in mind while reading the interesting and informative readings this week.

#### **Discussion Questions**

7. For many philosophical issues, a good place to start is to reflect on "common views" about the issues. Suppose you surveyed a range of people and asked them what the minds or mental lives of various species of animals are like, whether (any) animals are *conscious*, can *feel*, can *think*, can *reason*, have *emotions* and so on. What are some of the most common answers that would be given? What *reasons* would you often hear in favor of these answers? Are these reasons generally good reasons or not? Why?
8. There are historical and contemporary doubts that any animals possess minds. Summarize these doubts. Explain whether these doubts are reasonable or not, in your view. (This question might overlap with #8 below)
9. What are animals' minds like, according to most contemporary scientists and philosophers? What kind of mental states do (any) animals have, e.g., beliefs, desires, memory, reasoning, planning, expectations for the future, self-awareness, emotions, etc.? Summarize the research, focusing on different mental states for different species or kinds of animals, if appropriate.
10. How would one *know* or *reasonably believe* some claim about the mental states of animals? Explain what kind of reasoning processes and evidence philosophers, scientists and "ordinary people" appeal to when they argue that animals have minds.
11. What is it to "harm" someone? Can (any) animals be harmed? If so, which kinds of animals? How can they be harmed? Explain and defend your answers.
12. Free for all discussion area: please ask anything about the readings, comment on them, or raise any other issues, questions or concerns here.

*Of course, always feel free to raise any other questions, observations, criticisms and any other responses to the week's readings and issues.*

Papers start week 3.

## **Week 3: In Defense of Animals: Some Moral Arguments**

### **Overview:**

This week we will survey the most influential “theories of animal ethics,” i.e., general theories that attempt to explain the nature and extent of our moral obligations toward animals, which have been used to argue in defense of animals. As we will see, these theories are often extensions or developments of the moral theories that have been developed to explain how humans ought to treat other human beings. These thinkers often argue that the moral theory (or theories) that *best explain* the nature and extent of our moral obligations to human beings (especially vulnerable ones, such as babies, children, the mentally challenged, the elderly, and so on) have positive implications for many animals as well. Thus, they often argue that there are no *relevant differences* between the kinds of cases to justify protecting human beings but allowing serious harms to animals and, therefore, animals are due moral protections comparable to at least those given to comparably-conscious, aware, sentient human beings.

### **General Theories and Particular Cases**

This week will get an initial presentation of three of the most influential methods of moral thinking for *human to human* interactions that have been extended to apply to *human to animal* interactions, i.e., how humans ought to treat non-human animals.

These perspectives are, first, a demand for equality or *equal moral consideration of interests* (developed by Peter Singer; however he sometimes describes his ethical theory as a form of *utilitarianism*, although his book *Animal Liberation* does not presuppose it); second, a demand for respect of *the moral right to respectful treatment* (developed by Tom Regan); and, third, a demand that moral decisions be made *fairly and impartially* and the use of a novel thought experiment designed to ensure this (developed by Mark Rowlands, following John Rawls, the most influential political philosopher of the twentieth century).

We want to *try* to focus on these theories in themselves and their implications for animals “in general,” without so much focus on what they imply for particular uses of animals, e.g., for food, fashion experimentation, entertainment, and other purposes. This attempt to make things a bit more abstract and general might seem forced, and we will surely understand the theories more deeply more when we see them applied to particular cases. Nevertheless, we want to try to evaluate these theories as true or false, well-supported or not, on their own terms.

### **Arguments from Paradigm Cases: Inference to the Best Moral Explanation**

Earlier we saw that scientists (and philosophers) sometimes use a pattern of reasoning known as *inference to the best explanation* to explain non-moral phenomena, e.g., the existence of minds. Ethicists use this form of reasoning also, although what is usually being explained is some clear moral intuition, or a moral judgment that nearly everyone agrees on (and seemingly for good reason). Again, the pattern is something like this:

- A moral judgment – J – seems true, and what *makes* it true requires explanation.
- Moral explanation or hypothesis T *best explains* the truth of J (i.e., T is a better explanation than other candidate explanations in that it makes sense of more of the

data/observations/similar moral intuitions, allows us to make other moral judgments (thus enabling a kind of prediction, perhaps), is simpler, fits with pre-existing knowledge, etc. )

- *Therefore, probably* T, and what's entailed by T, are true.

Singer seems to use this pattern of reasoning, starting with the widely accepted moral judgments that *racism and sexism (and other prejudices) are wrong*. He gives an analysis of what racism and sexism *are* – they are not easy to define – and gives an explanation for *why* they are wrong, arguing that this explanation is a better explanation than some rival explanations. He then argues that this explanation, which appeals to *the principle of equality of consideration of interests*, has positive implications for animals. Since many animals have interests, the prejudice that results in their interests being ignored is *speciesism*.

Regan argues similarly, starting with the informed intuition that the men in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study were treated wrongly (p. 44; elsewhere he uses historical cases of harmful medical experiments on retarded children<sup>7</sup>). He argues that the *best explanation* why they way these men (and children) were treated was wrong has positive implications for animals. He argues that these men had moral rights to life, bodily integrity, and respectful treatment. He develops the “subject of a life” sufficient condition for having basic moral rights to life, to bodily integrity and respectful treatment, shows that this criteria for moral rights applies to many animals as well, and that they thereby have moral rights as well.

In both cases, the pattern is to start with what we are confident with, think about the best reasons to support that confident judgment, and see that that these reasons have implications for areas that we perhaps have not thought about as carefully. We then see that that we have to revise our previous judgments about that new kind of case or, *if we are to be consistent*, revise our initial judgments (e.g., about the human cases), or argue that nothing follows from one kind of case to another because they are relevantly dissimilar. Singer, Regan and Rowlands, as well as the others, are clear on the logical options.

### Sufficient Conditions for Taking Someone's Interests Seriously

The cases for animals can be seen as an attempt to identify this ‘**this**’ here:

*If* a being is like **this** \_\_\_\_\_, *then* we must take its interests seriously, it's wrong to harm it (except for very good reasons), we must respect it, etc.

Animal advocates typically argue that if we look at what we think about human beings, it appears that we think (or should think) that *all* human beings, especially those who are vulnerable – the very young and old – deserve such protections: e.g., none should be eaten, worn and experimented on. These philosophers argue that, for human beings, we seem to think the ‘this’ above is just consciousness or sentience or, as Regan puts it, being a “subject of a life,” and that this is a *sufficient condition* for it being the case that a being is wrong to harm. They argue that this principle applies to (some) animals as well, those animals that possess the relevant characteristics that humans have.

Most critics of this reasoning attempt to find other characteristics that would account for the wrongness of harming human beings, but seek characteristics that only human beings have

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<sup>7</sup> “Empty Cages: Animal Rights & Vivisection,” at <http://ethicsandanimals.googlepages.com/regan-emptycages.htm>

and no animals have. The challenge is, first, finding these characteristics and, second, explaining why they are morally relevant.

### **What the Questions Also Is Not: Not (Necessarily) Animal “Rights”**

To revisit an issue introduced in the first week, sometimes people describe all “pro-animal” thinkers as “animal rights” advocates. This isn’t correct: e.g., Singer, for one, argues in defense of animals without much mentioning any idea of rights. So, again, one can think that animals’ interests must be taken seriously, that it’s seriously wrong to harm animals in most circumstances, that animals have a high “moral status,” etc., but not think that they have rights or, at least, not find that to be a useful way of presenting one’s views.

But what are moral rights anyway? First, views that maintain that animals (and human beings) have moral rights are often moral theories that appeal to the idea of a moral right in explaining what *makes* wrong actions wrong and permissible actions permissible: usually they claim that an action is impermissible if it violates a right; thus, rights are constraints on behavior. We will examine two rights theories – Regan’s and Rowlands’ – in detail. While these theories typically support the view that most harmful uses of animals are morally permissible, the theory and the particular judgments about what’s morally permissible are, strictly, speaking, distinct.

A bit about moral rights: moral rights, *if they exist*, are *not* “man made,” and individuals who have right have them *even if* others do not recognize or acknowledge that. Moral rights are not “granted” or “given” by anyone: e.g., slaves had moral rights (to life, to liberty) *even though many people did not respect or acknowledge these rights*. When these moral rights were acknowledged or recognized, it is not the case that slaves were “given” or “granted” moral rights, since they already had them. Thus, sometimes people often ask whether animals should be “given” rights. Since *moral* rights are not “given,” this question is founded on a mistaken assumption.

Moral rights are always a right *to* something or a right *from* something, e.g., a right *to* life or a right *from* interference. There are no generic moral rights – just plain moral rights – so if someone claims that animals have (or lack) moral rights, the question we must ask is, “A right *to what*, or right *from what*?” Here there are many candidates: rights to life, to respectful treatment, to not being caused to suffer, to not be harmed, to have their interests taken into consideration, to liberty, to not being considered “property,” to not be “used” to benefit others, and on and on: there are many possible moral rights to consider.

Whenever we discuss a claim that animals have or lack moral rights, we need to be specific on which moral right(s) is under consideration. Some advocates of animal use have claimed that, e.g., animals have a *right* to be eaten, and a *right* to be skinned (alive!) for their fur, and thus calling themselves advocates of animal rights! Focusing on specific moral rights, such as rights to not be caused various kinds of harm, will prevent those who harm animals from being considered legitimate animal rights advocates.

Finally, appeals to moral rights can sometimes be “question begging,” which means to say that they just assume the conclusion that’s being defended, stating it in other words instead of supporting it. This can happen with other moral issues: someone might claim that abortion, i.e., killing unborn fetuses, is wrong because *unborn fetuses have a moral right to life*. Unless this person explains *why* fetuses have such a right, this argument *might* amount to just saying that killing fetuses is wrong *because* killing fetuses is wrong, which is just restating the conclusion as one’s premise. Similarly, someone might say that eating animals is not wrong because humans

have a moral right to eat them. Again, unless this person explains why we should think that we have this right, what might be said here is just that *eating animals is not wrong because it is not wrong for us to eat animals*. Since arguments should never just assume their conclusion, or merely restate it in different words, these arguments are no good.

Again, the core questions in ethics and animals are what moral categories we should think specific uses of animals fall into – morally permissible, morally obligatory, or morally impermissible/wrong – and the reasons why we should think this. Thinking in terms of moral rights can make the issues more confusing than they have to be.

13. For many ethical issues, a good place to start is to reflect on “common views” about the issues. Suppose you surveyed a range of people and asked them what kind of moral obligations we have towards animals (perhaps you should ask about specific animals or different kinds of animals). *Focusing on possible broadly “pro-animal” responses*, what are some of the most common answers that would be given? What *reasons* would you often hear in favor of these answers? Are these reasons generally good reasons or not? Why?
14. *For an audience who has not read the texts*, explain Singer’s view about what moral obligations we have towards animals and his main arguments favor of that view. What questions and objections do you have for him? How would he respond? Are his arguments sound? Why or why not?
15. *For an audience who has not read the texts*, explain Regan’s view about what moral obligations we have towards animals and his main arguments favor of that view. What questions and objections do you have for him? How would he respond? Are his arguments sound? Why or why not?
16. *For an audience who has not read the texts*, explain Rowlands’ view about what moral obligations we have towards animals and his main arguments favor of that view. What questions and objections do you have for him? How would he respond? Are his arguments sound? Why or why not?
17. *Should* people find any (or all) of the cases given in defense of animals to be persuasive? Which, if any, is strongest, in your opinion, and why? If you think people should be persuaded, why is it that they often are not? (If people should *not* be persuaded, why are some people convinced?). Any other questions or objections from anything from this section can be asked here.
18. Free for all discussion area: please ask anything about the readings, comment on them, or raise any other issues, questions or concerns here.

*Of course, always feel free to raise any other questions, observations, criticisms and any other responses to the week’s readings and issues.*

**Paper 1:**

First, Read: Jim Pryor’s “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper” at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

**Assignment:**

For an audience unfamiliar with ethics, logic and animal ethics, explain the strongest broad moral case to be made in defense of animals (this could be a single theorist’s approach, or

perhaps it could be a combination approach). Explain what this case implies in general for animals and how one defends or supports such a theory about how animals deserve to be treated. Raise and respond to at least three of what you think are the most important objections to your arguments or your position. 4-6 pages.

## **Week 4: Objections to Defenses of Animals and Defending Animal Use**

### **Overview:**

This week we will survey the most influential general moral theories that have been appealed to argue in defense of animal use and/or to object to the theories developed in defense of animals. As we will see, these theories are often extensions or developments of the moral theories that have been developed to explain how humans ought to treat other human beings. These writers often argue that the moral theory (or theories) that *best explain* the nature and extent of our moral obligations to human beings (especially vulnerable ones, such as babies, children, the mentally challenged, the elderly, and so on) *do not* have positive implications for animals. Thus, they argue that there are *relevant differences* between the kinds of cases that justify protecting all human beings but allowing serious harms to animals.

### **General Theories and Particular Cases**

Like last week, we want to *try* to focus on these theories in themselves and their implications for animals “in general,” without so much focus on what they imply for particular uses of animals, e.g., for food, fashion experimentation, entertainment, and other purposes. This will likely be harder than last week because many objections to pro-animal theories come from particular cases, e.g. arguments like these:

- Animal experimentation is morally permissible, if not obligatory.
- But if Regan’s theory is true, then animal experimentation is wrong.
- Therefore, Regan’s theory of animal rights is mistaken.
  
- There’s nothing wrong with raising animals to eat them.
- But if there’s nothing wrong with raising animals to eat them, then animals’ interests don’t deserve equal consideration.
- If animals’ interests don’t deserve equal consideration, then Singer’s theory is false.
- Therefore, Singer’s theory is false.

Of course, we want to know for what *reasons* we should accept these first premises, especially if we are familiar with ethics!

But perhaps a way to avoid some of these particular cases about animals at this time is to focus on what the theories of the critics of pro-animal thinking imply for human beings, especially the young, old, weak and powerless. Various kinds of contractarianisms support poor treatment of animals, but they seem to support poor treatment of humans as well, and so contractarians often feel a need to defend themselves from these objections. Maybe these theories can sometimes be better evaluated from the more neutral concern of human-to-human ethics.

In evaluating moral theories and thinking about ethics in general, you want to try to have your principles or theories have the right implications for particular cases and have those implications for the right reasons. Unfortunately there is no exact formula for doing this! Ethics can be hard.

### **Necessary Conditions for Taking Someone’s Interests Seriously: Cases Against Animals**

While animal advocates focus on *sufficient conditions* for someone being in “The Moral Club” (as Rowlands puts it), anti-animal theorists tend to focus on *necessary conditions*, claiming that:

We must take a being’s interests seriously, it’s wrong to harm it (except for very good reasons), we must respect it, etc., **only if** it is like this: \_\_\_\_.

They then typically fill in that blank with rather cognitively advanced abilities: sophisticated reasoning, thinking about one’s thinking, intellectual achievement, religious worship, and so on.

Their challenge, of course, comes from the fact that many human beings lack such sophisticated minds, yet we think we must take their interests seriously. This problem for anti-animal theorists is known as the “argument from marginal cases.” To get around it, these theorists often attempt to do some intellectual acrobatics, trying to relate non-mentally sophisticated human beings (who seem to lack the stated necessary condition for, e.g., having any moral rights) to sophisticated human beings in peculiar ways. We will attempt to pin down their reasoning and see if it seems to be generally valid or is developed as an ad hoc response to this problem or worse.

### **Finding Relevant Differences from Arguments from Paradigm Cases: Inference to *Better* Moral Explanations?**

Regarding above, anti-animal thinkers need to offer explanations of the clear cut cases of wrongs to human beings and *not* have those explanations have positive implications for animals.

### **Common Invalid Arguments**

An argument is invalid when the premises do not logically lead to the conclusion. Many objections to cases against animals are of a common invalid argument form called “denying the antecedent,” where the premises do not lead to the conclusion or the conclusion logically follow from the premises. This argument is invalid:

- *If* conscious, sentient animals have moral rights *then* seriously harming them is typically wrong.
- *But* animals *do not* have *any* moral rights.

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- *Therefore*, animal experimentation is morally *permissible*.

This argument is of the same invalid pattern as this argument:

- If you (the reader) were a professional basketball player, then you would be over a foot tall. [TRUE!]
- But you are *not* a professional basketball player. [TRUE!?!]
- *Therefore* you are not over a foot tall. [FALSE]

Non-professional basketball players should see that these premises are true but the conclusion false: this means that the premises do not lead to the conclusion. The same is true about the first argument above, since the pattern is the same. The point applies to this invalid argument too:

- If animals are “equal” to humans, as “important” has humans, have the same “moral status” as humans, then seriously harming them is typically wrong.
- But animals are not “equal” to humans, not as “important” has humans, and do have the same “moral status” as humans.
- Therefore seriously harming them is *not* typically wrong.

Furthermore, what it *means* to say these things about “equality,” “importance,” and “moral status” are not *at all* clear: much explanation would be needed for the kind of understanding needed to decide whether this claim is true or false.

### **Making the Discussion Concrete**

Again, the core questions in ethics and animals are what moral categories we should think specific uses of animals fall into – morally permissible, morally obligatory, or morally impermissible/wrong – and the reasons why we should think this. This week we should be trying to find the strongest, most important or at least most common and influential theories that would *seem* to support the conclusion that most (or any) routine, harmful uses of animals are just not morally wrong.

19. For many ethical issues, a good place to start is to reflect on “common views” about the issues. Suppose you surveyed a range of people and asked them what kind of moral obligations we have towards animals (perhaps you should ask about specific animals or different kinds of animals). *Focusing on possible broadly “anti-animal” responses (which some might describe as “pro-human”)*, what are some of the most common answers that would be given? What *reasons* would you often hear in favor of these answers? Are these reasons generally good reasons or not? Why?
20. What are the strongest, most important and/or most interesting objections that critics raise to the moral cases in defense of animals? Are these objections successful, i.e., do they defeat any of the defenses of animals (from last week)? Are these arguments sound? Why or why not?
21. *For an audience who has not read the texts*, explain Kant’s, Cohen’s, and Machan’s arguments against animals. What questions and objections do you have for them? How might they respond? Are their arguments sound? Why or why not?
22. *For an audience who has not read the texts*, explain the arguments “against animals” from contractarianism or the social contract theory (especially see DeGrazia’s discussion of Carruthers, and Regan’s discussion of Narveson from week 1). What questions and objections do you have for them? How might they respond? Are their arguments sound? Why or why not?
23. *Should* people find any (or all) of the cases “against animals” to be persuasive? Which, if any, is strongest, in your opinion, and why? If you think people should be persuaded, why is it that they often are not? (If people should *not* be persuaded, why are some people convinced?). Any other questions or objections from anything from this section can be asked here.
24. Free for all discussion area: please ask anything about the readings, comment on them, or raise any other issues, questions or concerns here.

*Of course, always feel free to raise any other questions, observations, criticisms and any other responses to the week's readings and issues.*

**Paper 2:**

Assignment: For an audience unfamiliar with ethics, logic and animal ethics, explain the strongest broad moral case to be made “against” animals and/or as a critical response to pro-animal ethical theorizing (this could be a single theorist’s approach, or perhaps it could be a combination approach). Explain what this case implies in general for animals and how one defends or supports such a theory about how animals deserve to be treated. Raise and respond to at least three of what you think are the most important objections to your arguments or your position. 4-6 pages.

## **Week 5: Wearing and Eating Animals**

### **Overview:**

Animal advocacy organization Vegan Outreach observes that, “The number of animals killed for fur in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to the human population of Illinois. The number of animals killed in experimentation in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to the human population of Texas. The number of mammals and birds farmed and slaughtered in the U.S. each year is approximately equal to *one and two-thirds the entire human population of Earth*. Over 99% of the animals killed in the U.S. each year die to be eaten.”<sup>8</sup> This week we will focus on the moral arguments for and against using animals for fur and for food (as well as for different kinds of animal-food production, e.g., “factory farm” versus “traditional animal husbandry”), as well as the relationships between these arguments: what one thinks about the morality of the fur industry *might* have implications for the morality of meat, dairy and egg industries.

### **Fur and Food**

Philosophers often don’t discuss the fur industry. However, the fur industry is huge. And many people who do not consider themselves strong animal advocates claim to oppose it. If we ask them why they oppose it, however, they often give reasons that *seem* to imply that killing animals for food is also wrong. Yet these same people often resist that conclusion. Their choice, if they wish to remain consistent then, is to revise their view about the fur industry, revise their view about the meat, dairy and egg industries, or find a relevant difference between the fur and agriculture industries such that one is wrong and the other is not. Can they do it?

### **Personal Challenges and Logic**

In my 10 or so years experience of teaching ethics courses, I have found that no topic brings out the rational and emotional *best* and *worst* in people than ethical questions about wearing and eating animals. This is not surprising since, unlike questions what *other people* should do, moral questions about animals are *personal*. As philosopher Peter Singer has observed, “For most human beings, especially in modern urban and suburban communities, the most direct form of contact with non-human animals is at mealtimes: we eat them”<sup>9</sup> (and wear them). For most of us, then, our own behavior is challenged when we reflect on the reasons given to think that change is needed in our treatment of, and attitudes toward, animals. That the issue is personal presents unique challenges, and great opportunities, for intellectual and moral progress.

This week we will examine the common assumption that there is nothing wrong with harming animals -- causing them pain, suffering, and an early death – so they might be eaten and worn. Our method, useful for better understanding all ethical debates, is to identify unambiguous and precise moral conclusions and make all the reasons in favor of the conclusion explicit, leaving no assumption unstated. Especially important will be the third of the three rules (introduced in week 1) for identifying and evaluating arguments:

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<sup>8</sup> Matt Ball, “Activism and Veganism,” at <http://www.veganoutreach.org/advocacy/path.html>

<sup>9</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), p. 95.

1. Make the stated conclusion(s) and premise(s) *precise* in quantity: is something said to be true (or false) of *all* things (or people, or animals, etc.), or just *some* of them (and if so, which ones)?
2. Clarify the intended meaning(s) of unclear or ambiguous words in conclusions or premises.
3. **State (any) *assumed* premises so that the *complete* pattern of reasoning in an argument is displayed and it is clear how the stated premise(s) logically leads to the conclusion.**

People often try to argue that killing animals to eat them is morally permissible by offering a quick premise like, “Meat tastes good,” or “I’ve always eaten meat.” They don’t seem to realize that they *seem* to be assuming the premises *if something tastes good then its permissible to kill it to eat it* (what if babies tasted good?!) and *if you’ve always done some action then doing that action morally permissible*, another arguably false premise.

### **Harms to Animals (and Humans): The Facts**

Why is the treatment of animals a moral issue? The simple answer is that animals are *harmed* by the practices required to bring them to our plates and put them on our backs, and harms need moral defense. This unit reviews the case for these industries being extremely harmful to animals and looks at the industries’ response to these charges. Harms to humans from eating animals (or eating animals to excess) are also detailed. Consider the position statement on vegetarianism from the leading authority on nutrition in North America based on their seventeen-page review of the recent nutrition research:

*It is the position of the American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada that appropriately planned vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. . . Well-planned vegan and other types of vegetarian diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including during pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence. . . A vegetarian, including vegan, diet can meet current recommendations for all of these nutrients. . . Vegetarian diets offer a number of nutritional benefits, including lower levels of saturated fat, cholesterol, and animal protein as well as higher levels of carbohydrates, fiber, magnesium, potassium, folate, and antioxidants such as vitamins C and E and phytochemicals. Vegetarians have been reported to have lower body mass indices than nonvegetarians, as well as lower rates of death from ischemic heart disease; vegetarians also show lower blood cholesterol levels; lower blood pressure; and lower rates of hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and prostate and colon cancer.<sup>10</sup>*

Ethical behavior *can* require self-sacrifice; however, this scientific research suggests that ethical behavior – i.e., *if* killing animals to eat them is wrong – can lead to personal health benefits.

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<sup>10</sup> “Position of the American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada: Vegetarian Diets,” *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 2003;103:748-765. At [http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/advocacy\\_933\\_ENU\\_HTML.htm](http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/advocacy_933_ENU_HTML.htm) and <http://ethicsandanimals.googlepages.com/ada-veg.pdf>

## Factory Farming vs. Vegetarianism vs. Veganism vs. “Humane” Animal Agriculture vs??

To return to the first week, we can envision Regan’s “cat case” transformed into a fur-bearer and an animal farmed for food. Here are some of the options:

- A. Any (or almost any) use of those animals is morally permissible; there are no moral obligations to those animals.
- B. Seriously harming those animals (e.g., causing them pain and suffering, killing them, etc.) is morally permissible provided they are housed in comfortable cages.
- C. Seriously harming those animals is permissible provided they are housed in comfortable cages, treated gently and killed painlessly.
- D. Seriously harming those animals is typically morally wrong, *even if* they are housed in comfortable cages, treated gently and killed painlessly.

Option (C) is intended to be analogous to so-called “humane” animal farming and slaughter. While everyone agrees that this is better for animals than factory farming, the question still remains: is this treatment of animals morally permissible or not? If something like option (D) is the most ethically defensible option, then (C) is not.

### “Painless” and “Humane” Killing

Option (C) includes the often heard claim that, “if animals are killed painlessly, then that’s morally OK.” This assumption might be true, but it’s worthwhile to notice that we reject it about ourselves. In most cases, if we were killed, even “painlessly,” we would be deprived of our (hopefully valuable) futures: everything we would have experienced is taken from us. Insofar as animals have futures, and killing them prevents them from experiencing those futures (and any of the good experiences they would have had), it seems that the same basic reasons why it is wrong to kill us might apply to many animals. So the assumption that “painless killing is automatically morally permissible” should be, at least, strongly doubted: good reasons would need to be given its favor.

25. For many ethical issues, a good place to start is to reflect on “common views” about the issues. Suppose you surveyed a range of people and asked them whether it’s morally permissible to wear and/or eat animals and *why*. What are some of the most common answers that would be given? What *reasons* would you often hear in favor of these answers? Are these reasons generally good reasons or not? Why?
26. Describe how animals are treated by the fur and animal agribusiness industries: what happens to animals when used for these purposes? What are the facts? How do these industries describe how they treat animals? Are they correct in their description of the facts?
27. Explain the strongest moral arguments for the conclusions that (a) *it’s wrong to kill animals for fur and/or the fur industry is morally impermissible* and (b) *it’s wrong to raise and kill animals for meat, milk and eggs and/or the animal agriculture industry – i.e., factory farming – is morally impermissible*. Are these arguments sound or not? Explain and defend your views.

28. Explain the strongest and/or most common moral arguments for the conclusions that (a) *it's not wrong to kill animals for fur* and/or (b) *it's not wrong to raise and kill animals for meat, milk and eggs*. Are these arguments sound or not? Explain and defend your views.
29. Should people (at least in "modern," industrialized societies) be vegetarians? Or should they be vegans? Or should they support smaller-scale, non-industrial, so-called "humane" animal farming and slaughter? Or should they support factory farming? Explain which response best captures our moral obligations and why.
30. Free for all discussion area: please ask anything about the readings, comment on them, or raise any other issues, questions or concerns here.

*Of course, always feel free to raise any other questions, observations, criticisms and any other responses to the week's readings and issues.*

**Paper 3:**

Write a 4-6 page argumentative essay that addresses all these questions and *defends* your answers from the strongest and/or most common objections:

- *In our society*, should animals and killed be raised to be eaten? What kind of treatment of farmed animals is morally permissible? Are there any changes that we are morally obligated to make regarding how chickens, pigs, cows and other (currently) farmed animals are treated? Defend your answers with reasons.
- *In our society*, should animals and killed be raised to be fur-trimmed and fur coats? What kind of treatment of fur-bearers is morally permissible? Are there any changes that we are morally obligated to make regarding how fur-bearers are treated? Defend your answers with reasons.
- What are the relationships between your answers about the fur and food animals issues, and your reasons in favor of these answers?
- What should your personal response to these issues be? Should you buy or wear fur? Should you buy or eat meat, eggs and/or dairy products? If yes, from where? If no, why not?

## **Week 6: Pets / Companion Animals; Zoos, Hunting, Racing, and other Uses of Animals**

### **Overview:**

This week we will discuss the moral responsibilities involved in keeping pets or companion animals and related moral issues concerning shelters, adoption, and killing unwanted companion animals. We will also discuss the arguments for and against hunting, dog and horse racing, rodeos, zoos and related uses of animals: is using animals for any or all of these purposes morally permissible or not? Why or why not?

### **“Pets” & Pet “Ownership” vs. Companion Animals & Animal Guardians**

Keeping animals as companions raises unique responsibilities. Unlike many other ethical issues involving animals where our moral obligations are arguably largely “negative” – to *not* harm them, to leave them alone, etc. – we arguably have “positive” obligations towards any companion animals we might bring into our homes, e.g., to provide them with food, shelter, medical care, and companionship. This, of course, takes time, effort and money, sometimes a lot of money.

These financial demands can be a burden and give rise to hard questions about the extent of our obligations to animals. After all, there is no health insurance for animals, and animals’ healthcare costs could create great financial strain. What should be done in these common situations? Go into debt to pay for the medical bills? Find someone else to take the animal who can pay? Have the animal killed? Something else? The answers might not be morally or financially easy.

Many critics of animal advocates often say things like, “Animal rights advocates oppose having pets.” This claim seems to be a result either of ignorance or intentional manipulation. First, many animal advocates, including philosophers, have companion animals and often mention these animals in their writings. So it is ignorant to claim that animal advocates oppose having animals as companions.

Many animal advocates, however, do oppose companion animal *ownership* and, perhaps, the use of the word “pet” if it implies ownership. This is because if you own something, then that something is your *property*. And (generally, with some exceptions), if something is your property, then (generally, with some exceptions) you can do *whatever you want with it*, including destroy (or kill) it for whatever reason you would like, or no reason at all. Thus, the objection is that in thinking of companion animals as pets and thereby owned property, that nearly implies that animals’ interests deserve no consideration in their own right and so on. Animal advocates, of course, reject that. And they argue that breeding companion animals is wrong because for every “new” animal produced another already existing animal in a shelter will not be adopted and thus killed. But they also believe that animals, such as cats and dogs, can be kept as companions, provided they are well cared for.

These are some common views about companion animals held by many animal advocates. Given that this is what they believe, why do critics of animal advocacy so often say that animal advocates oppose keeping companion animals?

### **Ends and Means**

Like many uses of animals, using animals in rodeos, circuses, zoos, racing, in hunting, etc. are often justified by appealing to various “ends” or “products” of the use. For these kinds of arguments (for both these issues, as well as when this kind of argument is used to defend eating animals, or experimenting on them, and so on), here are some questions to ask:

- Is this a morally justified end, i.e., some worthy goal?
  - E.g., zoos might be justified by the claim that they are supposed to result in *greater respect for animals*, arguably a laudable goal. Rodeos might be justified by the claim that they produce *entertainment for people*, surely a more controversial goal. Some hunters might claim that the goal of hunting is *to bring about the human pleasures resulting from killing animals*, arguably a goal that could not be morally justified.
- Is this use of animals an *effective*, or the most effective, means toward that goal?
  - E.g., with zoos, scientific research might show that zoo attendance results in no greater respect for animals, and perhaps increased disrespect for animals. Thus, perhaps zoos are not an effective means toward that end. Regarding hunting, yes, killing animals is indeed the most effective means to getting the pleasures that people claim to get from killing animals (but perhaps video games could have similar results?).
- Or are there other, better, ways to achieve this goal?
  - E.g., regarding zoos, surely there are better ways to teach respect for animals. Regarding rodeos, there are other ways to produce entertainment for humans and, arguably, ways that don't produce harm for animals (or humans) surely are morally better than those that depend on harm.
- Finally, what exactly are the *best* reasons to think that using animals for such an end is *morally justified*, especially in cases where animals are harmed greatly (and we would never dream of using human beings for such a purpose)? Are these reasons any good, i.e., sound arguments for the conclusion that this activity is morally permissible? And what exactly are the *best* reasons to think that using animals for such an end is *morally unjustified*, especially in cases where animals are harmed greatly (and we would never dream of using human beings for such a purpose)?

These sorts of questions above are applicable to all questions about animal use.

31. For many ethical issues, a good place to start is to reflect on “common views” about the issues. Suppose you surveyed a range of people and asked them about the morality of the various uses of animals in this unit. What are some of the most common answers that would be given? What *reasons* would you often hear in favor of these answers? Are these reasons generally good reasons or not? Why?
32. While some critics of animal advocates claim that animal advocates *oppose* keeping “pets” or companion animals, they are clearly mistaken and ignorant of what animal advocates think. Nevertheless, what ethical issues and responsibilities are raised by keeping pets or companion animals? Are any issues genuinely challenging? Morally, how should we respond to these issues?
33. Describe how animals are treated by the various industries discussed in this unit and used in these various ways: what happens to animals when used for these purposes? What are the facts? How do these industries and practitioners describe how they treat animals? Are

they correct in their description of the facts?

34. Explain the strongest moral arguments *in favor of* using animals for entertainment, for zoos, for hunting, and/or any other uses from this section. Are these arguments sound or not? Explain and defend your views.
35. Explain the strongest moral arguments *against* using animals for entertainment, for zoos, for hunting, and/or any other uses from this section. Are these arguments sound or not? Explain and defend your views.
36. Free for all discussion area: please ask anything about the readings, comment on them, or raise any other issues, questions or concerns here.

*Of course, always feel free to raise any other questions, observations, criticisms and any other responses to the week's readings and issues.*

**Paper 4:**

Write a 4-6 page argumentative essay that explains and addresses the ethical issues raised by at least one of the uses of animals discussed in the readings this week, defend a moral conclusion about that issue, and respond to the strongest and/or most common objections to your arguments.

## **Week 7: Experimenting on Animals; Animals in Education**

### **Overview:**

This week we will consider perhaps the most controversial ethical issues concerning animals, namely questions about the morality of animal experimentation and research for medical, scientific, psychological, educational and *veterinary* purposes. These issues are often considered most controversial because, unlike using animals for clothing, entertainment or even food, it is claimed that animal research provides *significant* medical benefits for humans that, some claim, *could not be attained any other way* than by using animals. Thus, this is an area where animals' and humans' interests are said to unavoidably conflict. This week we will attempt to evaluate claims about the scientific and medical merit of animal experimentation, as these *might* be relevant to its morality (or the might not), and directly attempt to determine the morality of various kinds of animal use in science, medicine, education and research.

### **Science Does Not Answer Moral Questions**

An important thing to remember in discussing the morality of animal experimentation is that *science does not answer moral questions*. What benefits (if any) that result from any kind of experiment (human or animal) do not *in themselves* show that some experiment is morally justified. That occurs only in conjunction with moral principles and moral reasons, and those aren't determined by the science. Making arguments logically valid can make this clear, because then it will be obvious that there's a "leap" from some claim about benefits or scientific results to a *therefore*, doing this is morally permissible. As stated, the conclusion does not yet follow.

### **Theoretical Foundations and Unprincipled Responses**

One way of addressing moral questions is to appeal to moral principles and general theories of morality and moral reasoning: philosophers often approach issues that way, and so it is often clear what their moral arguments are and what reasons are given for their premises. Many defenders of animal experimentation do not follow this pattern however and so we must make premises and conclusions clear and precise and, if needed, add the missing premise(s) needed to reveal the full pattern of reasoning. Here are a number of common arguments given in defense of animal experimentation that should be addressed before we get to the readings:

#### **"Benefits" Arguments:**

Many people argue that there are medical benefits for humans that result from animal experimentation, e.g., treatments and cures for diseases, improvements in health, and so forth – and that, therefore, animal experimentation is morally permissible. The suggested argument is this:

(P1) Animal experimentation benefits humans.

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(C) Therefore, animal experimentation is morally permissible.

There are many problems with this argument. First, (P1) is imprecise in many ways. *Much* animal experimentation is done without *any* expectation that it will yield (medical) benefits for humans. So (P1) should claim that *some* animal experimentation benefits humans. But there is more imprecision. It either says:

- (P2) Some animal experimentation benefits *some* humans, or
- (P3) Some animal experimentation benefits *all* humans.

(P3) is false. About 30,000 people, many of whom are children, die *each day* from starvation, malnutrition, and lack of *very basic* medical care.<sup>11</sup> These people, and at least millions of other humans, do not benefit from it. About (P2), *as it is stated*, few scientific, humanistic and/or ethical critics of animal experimentation deny it. There have been many, many experiments on animals. To claim that *not one* of them has led to *any* benefits for *any* humans – even just by good luck – would be to claim something false. So (P2) *is* true: *some* humans benefit medically from *some* animal experimentation.

Some people seem to think this *automatically* shows that animal experimentation is morally permissible. Oddly, they often seem to think this supports a more precise conclusion that *all* animal experiments are permissible, even those that do not lead to any benefits for humans and are expected not to. But no such conclusions follow, for many reasons. First, just because *some* humans benefit from something does not entail that it is morally permissible for them to get it: e.g., some people might benefit from an *extremely* expensive medical procedure, or from receiving vital organs taken from living, healthy people. But those benefits do not *automatically* justify directing so much money toward them (at the expense of others) or killing innocent people to take those organs.

To assume something different about animal cases – i.e., that it is morally permissible to seriously harm animals to benefit humans – just *assumes* that animal experimentation is permissible: it does not give any reasons in favor of that. As we saw above, common claims about rights, importance and moral status do not justify this assumption, but perhaps arguments discussed below will help justify it.

### “Necessity” Arguments:

Related to the argument from benefits is the argument from “necessity” or the claim that animal experiments are “essential”: “animal experiments are ‘necessary’; therefore, they are morally permissible.” To evaluate this argument we must first ask what is *meant* by “necessary”? There is a sense of the term on which animal experimentation clearly *is* necessary: to do experiments on animals, it is *necessary* to do experiments on animals. This is true because to do any exact, particular action, it is *necessary* to do *that* action. Whatever is truly meant by “necessity,” an advocate of these arguments assumes a moral premise like the following:

*If* doing some action is “necessary,” *then* it is morally permissible.

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Singer’s *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (Yale, 2002) provides information and arguments for the conclusion that we are morally obligated to assist people in absolute poverty. Shannon Daley-Harris & Jeffrey Keenan’s *Our Day to End Poverty* ([OurDayToEndPoverty.com](http://OurDayToEndPoverty.com)) (Berrett Koehler, 2006) gives guidance how.

For some meanings of “necessity” animal experimentation advocates attach to that claim, it will likely be false to say that all, or even much, animal experimentation is “necessary.” For these meanings, this moral principle will have no application. There are other meanings of “necessary,” e.g., that to say something is “necessary” could be to say that, “it couldn’t be achieved in any other way.” On this meaning, many animal experiments *are* “necessary.” But, on this meaning, some human vivisection is also “necessary” since some benefits from it also “cannot be achieved in any other way.” The principle above implies such vivisection is not wrong, but it is, so the above principle is false.

### **“No Alternatives” Arguments:**

The same critical observations can be given about arguments from there allegedly being “no alternatives” to animal experimentation: that’s likely false and that doesn’t seem to automatically make doing something morally permissible either.

### **“Painless” and “Humane” Killing, Again**

In the context of experimentation we also hear the “if the animals are killed painlessly, then that’s morally OK” assumption. Again, we should notice that we reject it about ourselves. In most cases, if we were killed, even “painlessly,” we would be deprived of our (hopefully valuable) futures: everything we would have experienced is taken from us. Insofar as animals have futures, and killing them prevents them from experiencing those futures (and any of the good experiences they would have had), it seems that the same basic reasons why it is wrong to kill us applies to many animals. So the assumption that “painless killing is automatically morally permissible” should be, at least, strongly doubted: good reasons would need to be given its favor.

### **Logic and Keeping Cool:**

While animal ethics, especially about animal experimentation and related issues, can be a heated topic, logic can help keep you cool. Find conclusions, ask for reasons, and demand a fair and impartial evaluation of those reasons. Keep the ethics and the science straight, and remember that scientific results have moral implications only in light of moral principles. By taking this course, you have more “ethics training” than nearly all scientists who defend animal use, so make use of your skills!

37. For many ethical issues, a good place to start is to reflect on “common views” about the issues. Suppose you surveyed a range of people and asked them whether it’s morally permissible (or even morally obligatory) to experiment on animals and *why*. What are some of the most common answers that would be given? What *reasons* would you often hear in favor of these answers? Are these reasons generally good reasons or not? Why?
38. Describe how animals are treated by in medical, scientific, psychological, educational and industrial experimentation and research: what happens to animals when used for these purposes? What are the facts? How do these industries describe how they treat animals? Are they correct in their description of the facts?
39. Explain the strongest moral arguments for the conclusions that animal experimentation is (nearly always) wrong *and/or* that an experiment on an animal is wrong *unless* the

experimenters would be willing to perform the experiment on a similarly conscious and sentient human infant. Are these arguments sound or not? Explain and defend your views.

40. Summarize the wide range of activities and methods of research that can be (and is) done to improve human health and cure disease that does not involve animals.
41. Explain the strongest and/or most common moral arguments for the conclusions that (a) animal experimentation is almost never wrong, indeed it's often morally obligatory and/or (b) animal experimentation is morally justified when it is "necessary" because there are "no alternatives" to produce the desired benefits. Are these arguments sound or not? Explain and defend your views.
42. Free for all discussion area: please ask anything about the readings, comment on them, or raise any other issues, questions or concerns here.

*Of course, always feel free to raise any other questions, observations, criticisms and any other responses to the week's readings and issues.*

**Paper 5:**

What, if any, kind of medical, scientific, psychological, commercial/industrial, educational and/or *veterinary* experimentation or research (and other uses, e.g., dissections) are morally permissible? Which are morally impermissible? Thoroughly defend your view and respond to the strongest and/or most common objections to your arguments. 4-6 pages.

## Week 8: Activism for Animals

### **Overview:**

What, if any, kinds of actions done to try to improve the treatment of animals (including, perhaps, trying to eliminate various uses of animals) are morally permissible? Which, if any, are morally obligatory? Changing our diets? Educating others? Working for larger cages and more humane treatment, or for the abolishment of (some) animal use industries, or *both*? Trying to change the laws to better protect animals? Illegal actions (done covertly or openly)? Undercover investigations to reveal animal abuse? Rescuing or releasing animals from animal use industries? Exposing people and businesses who support harmful animal use? Violence of any kind, ever? Threats of violence? *Terrorism*? We will explore a range of tactics and attempt to evaluate them morally.

### **Criticisms or Complaints about (Some) Activists Have No Implications for the Morality of Animal Use**

Activists try to bring about change in others' beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Naturally, since people tend to be resistant to change, people often do not like activists. This dislike sometimes leads to bad arguments.

When people are unhappy with activists and what they do, they sometimes seem to think that this has some bearing on the morality of the *actions* that the activist is concerned with. For example, you might hear someone say something like, "It's OK to eat meat. After all, vegetarians are so pushy and self-righteous and 'in your face' about it all." Or, "Animal research is clearly a good thing. After all, animal rights activists are so obnoxious in their protests and some of them even break the law and try to intimidate scientists." Activists – for animals and many other issues – often get called a lot of bad names and are thought poorly of.

These responses, while unfortunately common, are extremely poor, if they are given to try to show that some use of animals is, contrary to what the activist argues, morally permissible. This is because no moral evaluation of *actions* follows from evaluations about *people*. Think about the abortion controversy. Suppose someone said, "Some anti-abortionists threaten and even murder abortion providers; these activists are bad people." If they then said, "*Therefore*, we should think that abortion is morally OK," the conclusion simply doesn't follow. And it never follows elsewhere: whether an action is morally permissible or not is not determined by any activists' behavior, good or bad. The issues are separate and logically distinct.

"Smear campaigns" against activists are also typically based on false generalizations about activists. Yes, *some* animal activists are rude, obnoxious or whatever, but surely *some* animal use advocates are also rude, obnoxious or whatever. And some animal advocates are also quite nice, friendly and respectful, as are some advocates of animal use (at least to human beings). But we must keep in mind that none of this has any bearing on the moral status of any animal use.

### **"Welfarism" & "Welfarists" versus "Animal Rights" & "Abolitionists": Ends and Means**

A current heated controversy among animal advocates is whether they should be – as some describe it – *either* advocates of "animal welfare" and "welfare reforms," *or* advocates for "animal rights" and the "abolition" of harmful animal use, or *both*. These terms are often ill-

defined and not carefully thought through. This can lead to needless conflict among animal advocates and an inability to understand what kind of information might help resolve these debates. Thinking about “ends” or “goals” and “means” or “strategies” can help us understand these distinctions and better assess (and perhaps *overcome*) this debate amongst activists.

First, ends: what would be a morally acceptable *end goal* for the treatment of animals? What kind of world would we have if all animals were treated in morally permissible ways, where we could say, “We have achieved the moral goal for how animals ought to be treated, since none are treated wrongly anymore?”

Regan’s cat case presents two broad options – among many – for such a goal:

- C. Seriously harming animals is permissible provided they are housed in comfortable cages, treated gently and killed painlessly.
- D. Seriously harming animals is typically morally wrong, *even if* they are housed in comfortable cages, treated gently and killed painlessly.

Anyone who claims (C) is an acceptable goal or end we can call a “welfarist”: they believe that once *certain kinds* of harms to animals are minimized or eliminated, it is still usually morally permissible to seriously harm animals, e.g., by killing them.

Their view might vary depending on the purposes behind these harms, of course. And there are important details, e.g., about which harms are permissible to cause and which aren’t, that they would need to explain so we fully understand the view. And, most importantly, whether any arguments in favor of welfarism are sound and withstand objections is something we would want to think about very carefully.<sup>12</sup>

Anyone who believes that (C) is deficient for an ideal goal and that (D) is that ideal we might call a “genuine” animal rights advocate. Or, so that we say what we really mean, we could just say they believe that *seriously harming animals is typically morally wrong, even if they are housed in comfortable cages, treated gently and killed painlessly*. We would want to understand their reasons for why they think that, and whether any arguments in favor of this kind of view are sound and withstand critical scrutiny is something we would also want to think about very carefully.

Beyond the question of acceptable or ideal final goals or ends for animals is the question of “means”: what sort of actions, policies, strategies, campaigns, and other activist activities will be the most effective *means* toward the desired end goal for animals? In particular, if the goal is (D), the “animal rights” end, what should be done *now* to best achieve this, or get us closest to it, as soon as possible?

Here is where the debate begins. Should we now campaign for larger cages, and, once successful with that, then campaign for “no cages” – i.e., argue that animals shouldn’t be used in the first place? (Or should some activists do the former and other activists the latter?) The former *might* lead to some small improvements now (or it might not), but it also might forestall or prevent greater improvements that *might* have occurred had the focus been on “empty cages.” On

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<sup>12</sup> Some might observe that, in practice, those who call themselves “welfarists” or “advocates of animal welfare” typically accept just about any use of animals, i.e., they deem just about all harmful uses of animals as “necessary” and/or respecting “animal welfare.” This may be true, but it doesn’t show that welfarism is false. This may, however, suggest that there really is no clearly defined view “welfarism”: it’s just some words that people use but the view really has no implications for animal use because we can’t pin it down in any rigorous way. See Gary Francione’s work for discussion.

the other hand, campaigns for “empty cages” *might* fall on too many deaf ears and yield no short term improvements. But perhaps enough ears eventually will hear the message and this will result in widespread *abolition* of animal use, perhaps incrementally, one industry or sub-industry after another. Or maybe not.

These debates are often divisive, but it’s not clear that they should be. For one, they often involve matters that are largely speculative, such as the long-term effects of some campaign strategy (as compared to another). Here we are dealing with little knowledge and hard data; we are often left with guesswork, hopes and under-informed estimations. This ignorance should result in greater humility and less dogmatism on this topic, and a call for *formal* training in areas that might bring in some useful information to help us answer these questions about means, such as economics, marketing, consumer psychology, statistics and so forth. We should agree that we don’t know what we need to know to bring about our desired end, and turn our focus towards gaining that knowledge.

A second reason why these debates shouldn’t be divisive is that it is not clear that they are philosophical ones. As suggested above, they are largely empirical and scientific. Our ends do not obviously dictate our means. Suppose we lived a few hundred years ago, came to believe that slavery was wrong and should be abolished, not merely made more “humane.” We have set our *ends*, but what *means* should we use to achieve that end ASAP? Back then, there was no obvious answer, for reasons comparable to those mentioned about. These issues were debated then (and are still debated now, since human slavery still exists) and animal advocates can surely learn from studying that debate.

### **Animal Advocates *Promoting* Animal Use?**

As a concrete example of the issue above, some animal advocacy organizations have recently begun giving a “platform” for animal-use industries, especially those who practice so-called “humane” farming. Whether this is an effective (or dismal) strategic means to help bring about an “animal rights” end, or whether this should be seen as a statement that the morally acceptable end really is “welfarism” is something that many activists have begun debating.

### **Illegal Actions**

Let us now turn to some more controversial forms of activism. Consider “open rescues” of animals from farms: these typically involve *trespass*, *breaking and entering*, and *theft* of animals that are somebody’s *property*. All these actions are *illegal*. Some people argue that *such rescues are morally wrong because they are illegal*. They might argue similarly against any form of activism that involves illegal activity.

These are unsound arguments and nearly everyone agrees with that because nearly everyone believes that this unstated premise, which is essential to the argument, is *false*:

Necessarily, if an action is illegal, then it is morally impermissible.

Hiding Jews from Nazi’s was illegal, yet morally permissible; helping slaves escape to freedom was illegal, yet morally permissible. Many more examples make the same point. Contrary to a common reaction, these examples *do not* make any “comparisons” *whatsoever* between animal

issues and slavery or human holocausts<sup>13</sup>; they are simply used to show that any (or just about any) argument against some kind of activism based on the premise that it is illegal is unsound (or, at least, just about everyone's beliefs entail that it is unsound, since they think the above premise is false: just because something is illegal does not necessarily entail that it is morally wrong).

Animal advocates are advised to read Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."<sup>14</sup> They will find much to resonate with Dr. King's discussion.

## Violent Actions

More controversial forms of activism involve violence or threats of violence of different kinds. Violence comes in many different forms, as our authors observe.

Some animal advocates, e.g., some members of the ALF (Animal Liberation Front), engage in property destruction (e.g., of animal cages, computers with experimental data, etc.) and even sometimes even arson. Although they claim that their actions are "non-violent," this strains the concept of violence. They argue that since they are not violent *to* anyone, i.e., they do not inflict bodily harm on anyone, they thereby act non-violently.

This inference does not follow: one can act *violently* yet do no violence *to* anyone. For example, it seems to make perfect sense to say that someone could *violently* smash carton of fruits and vegetables with a sledgehammer, especially if the person was in a heated frenzy. One might not want young children to see such a spectacle because, well, it's too violent! So the ALF's insistence that they are always non-violent strains the meaning of the term.

Perhaps they (and animal use industries) want to insist that they are non-violent because they think this principle is true:

All acts of violence are morally impermissible.

If this were true, and they acted violently (in performing arson, or in how they treat animals, for example), that would imply that they were acting wrongly.

But the above principle is false, according to most people: violence can be, and often is, morally justified. If violence (or threats of violence) are needed for self-defense, then it's permissible. If it's needed to defend an innocent third party, then it's justified. Perhaps some wars can be justified. So the above principle is false, according to most people.

Most people might even think that it's false regarding some animals too: if someone tried to attack your dog or cat, might you be morally justified in responding with violence, or threats of violence, to defend your companion animal, if needed? What if the animal was a stray? What if the animal was in a farm, slaughterhouse or lab? If they knew the details of the case, perhaps many people might think that violence, if needed for defending animals, would be morally permissible in at least some of these cases.

So *perhaps* violence could be justified in cases of rescue. Whether violence can ever be justified for any other purposes, e.g., in an attempt to change society's general views about our obligations to animals, seems extremely doubtful. In fact, given all the relevant considerations, it

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<sup>13</sup> For an insightful discussion of such comparisons, see Karen Davis's *The Holocaust and the Henmaid's Tale: A Case for Comparing Atrocities* (Lantern, 2005). <http://www.upc-online.org/>

<sup>14</sup> Widely reposted online; <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf> and wi

is likely that any such violence, including possible *genuine* “terrorism,” would be deeply morally wrong, for reasons that Regan, Singer and Rowlands articulate.

43. For many ethical issues, a good place to start is to reflect on “common views” about the issues. Suppose you surveyed a range of people and asked them what kinds of animal advocacy (if any) is good, effective and/or acceptable, and what kinds (if any) are bad, ineffective and/or unacceptable. What are some of the most common answers that would be given? What *reasons* would you often hear in favor of these answers? Are these reasons generally good reasons or not? Why?
44. Describe the range of options for activism for animals. Explain which you think are most effective or useful (for what?), the least effective or useful (for what?) and why.
45. Obviously, animal use industries are critical of animal activists. Describe their responses to activists, their “counter-activism” and your moral evaluation of their tactics.
46. Is any *illegal* activity (e.g., “open-rescues”) for animals ever moral justified? When and why, or why not? Is violence, of any kind, ever morally justified? When and why, or why not?
47. What kind of activism, if any, should you personally be engaged in? Is this a moral obligation? Why should you do this kind activism rather than another? Justify your choices with reasons.
48. Free for all discussion area: please ask anything about the readings, comment on them, or raise any other issues, questions or concerns here.

*Of course, always feel free to raise any other questions, observations, criticisms and any other responses to the week’s readings and issues.*

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Syllabus: <https://sites.google.com/site/ethicsandanimals/EthicsandAnimalsSyllabus.pdf>

Schedule of readings and assignments:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ethicsandanimals/EthicsandAnimalsReadings.pdf>

Schedule of lectures:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ethicsandanimals/EthicsandAnimalsLecturesDiscussionQuestionsAssignments.pdf>

\* These files are also in the HSU online system.