

**Title of the Dissertation:**  
**Moral Status of Animals: Debates and Dimensions**  
**ABSTRACT**

Research on Animal Ethics raises a number of philosophical questions about how we should understand morality and how we should understand animals. By philosophical, I mean simply the quest for a deeper understanding of debatable questions about the nature of reality and proper conduct of life. We need to emphasize the evolutionary continuity and argue that humans share with other mammals the same basic suite of moral behaviors, namely fairness, cooperation and empathy. We also need to suggest that morality may exist along a continuum, from simpler to more complex patterns of behavior. How different are humans from animals? Traditionalist claims that animals are inferior to humans in power, intelligence and evolutionary status. They are neither moral agent, nor rational, neither possessed with free will, nor are they capable of linguistic expressions thus, they are not bounded by social contract to humans and so on. Philosophers from Plato to Rawls have shown their preferences for human chauvinism, which make human and only human to be worthy of moral consideration.

Thus animal ethics examines the beliefs that are held about the moral status of animals. Animal ethics does not presume that any particular point of view is good and right. It accommodates a number of approaches for trying to resolve animal-human moral issues. The question remains: what is moral status? An individual has moral status for us if we believe that it makes a difference, morally, how that individual is treated, apart from the effects it has on others. That is, an individual has moral standing for us if, when making moral decisions, we feel we ought to take that individual's welfare into account for the individual's own sake and not merely for our benefit or someone else's benefit. We use the term moral status or moral

importance to refer to the circumstances that a being is a member of moral community. Members of a moral community include moral agents and moral subjects. It is assumed that there are certain features which qualify them as moral subjects, such as sentience, higher cognitive capacities, the capacity to flourish, sociability, and the possession of a life.

Western philosophy is remarkably inconsistent in applying morality exclusively to the lives of human beings rather than to the lives of all living entities. Most of the philosophers in past centuries have largely given negative view about the moral status of animals. Two thousand years ago, Greek philosophers were of the view that kindness and benevolence ought to be extended to the creatures of every species. Greek philosopher Plutarch wrote about the moral interests of animal's independent from any belief in transmigration of souls. However, the Greeks are generally believed that the capacity for using language is the nature of human, which makes them human. This linguistic differentiation is literal in case of animals that they cannot talk and we do. Control of speech is central to all Greeks thought. Also the primacy of reason is a distinguishing criterion for coming under the purview of morality. Aristotle believes that non-human species are only subject of our exploitation. Aquinas thought that animals were put on earth by God for human purpose. Thus in the history of western philosophy, we find that Descartes claimed that animals are nothing but the sophisticated biological machine. Beside this, Wittgenstein claims that since animals lack a system of conventional signs, they lack fundamental tools for a mental life. Hume suggests that there are some differences of reasoning ability between humans and non-human species. One such difference is that animals but not humans possess particular cognitive instinct, which helps them to survive and reproduce, and another is that animals do not engage in demonstrative reason, and finally we may say that only humans are capable of improving their reasoning ability, which animals do not.

For Kant, rational being means a being that is able to choose the way of good life. In fact he tried to show us that we have no moral obligation towards non-human species. On the contrary, there are some philosophers also who thought that non-human species are not only automata, they have also rationality, self-consciousness, and moreover dignity like other normal human being. As for example- in *The Descent of Man* Darwin claims that “there is no fundamental difference between man and higher mammals in their mental faculties. His theory says that we are all related, not that we are all identical but every species has its unique adaptation. Regan explained the “right view” in which certain animals have basic rights and ought to be taken into consideration. In one sentence, we may say that Regan formulated his theory on the basis of inherent value of specified individuals. Utilitarian philosopher Bentham wrote that, “The question is not can they reason? Nor can they talk? But can they suffer? Peter Singer’s philosophy lies on the belief that there is no room to disregard interests on the grounds of race, sex, species or intellect. He realized that the implications of utilitarian theory for animals-philosophical consistency required him to include animals in his utilitarian theory. What we have analyzed in this chapter is that moral rules are species-neutral: the same rules that govern our treatment of humans should also govern our treatment of non-humans. In this chapter we have made some arguments in favor and against of the view given by different philosophers regarding the moral status of animals. Kant suggested that we have indirect duties towards animals and we ought to save animals from human-caused accidents like, when animals come under cars.

In chapter three entitled “*Animals in Research and Animal Welfare*” we have discussed the debate about animal research. When our human population shows explosive growth, it is other animals that suffer, demand for animal products, medical needs, and food requirements is rising rapidly. In modern times, we can see that every scientist agrees with the views that

animals have contributed to the development of life sciences and medicines over the past few years. In fact, scientists think that studies on animals provide a better idea of what benefits and complications are likely to see in human beings. The basic assumption of using animals in laboratories experiment is to stop some disease in humans. Question may be raised that as a rational human being is it morally justified or permissible to use animals as tools for any type of painful research? As we know that approximately forty million animals are killed per year in order to produce far products. We may say that it is a barbaric way of research. After enduring these terrifying, painful procedures animals are then usually dumped back into a cage without painkillers. In the contemporary modern society, humans are engaged in a serious debate about the rights and wrongs of animal use. So, to limit the human harm on animals in laboratory experiments researchers' advocate three RS of human animal experimentation. The use of alternatives to animals is a legal requirement in the UK, and that alternatives are always used whenever they are available.

In chapter four entitled "*Vegetarianism and Living Well*" we will discuss that if a vegetarian attempts to persuade others that they should adopt vegetarian diet then it requires philosophical attention. Eating animal flesh may raise different types of moral questions. In philosophical term, it is being treated as a means to human ends not as an end-in-itself. According to Carol J Adams, "to talk about eliminating meat is to talk about displacing one aspect of male control and demonstrates the way in which animals oppression and women's oppression are linked together." The demand not to be treated like animals was a common rallying cry among early feminists. Underlying this idea is the notion that the exploitation of rational beings (like humans) is morally wrong whereas the exploitation of nonhuman animals is not. We can see that peoples who are omnivorous don't usually claim that animals aren't morally important. One may ask, why be a vegetarian? From

moral perspective, vegetarianism may be understood as the view that due to some moral principles, one ought not to eat certain edible animals and animal products. Thus, vegetarians need to be tolerant if they want to convert others into vegetarians. If we accept that animals have rights then killing animals for food is morally wrong. Peter Singer opines, “I am a utilitarian. I am also a vegetarian. I am a vegetarian because I am a utilitarian. I believe that applying the principle of utility to our present situation - especially the methods now used to rear animals for food and the variety of food available to us - leads to the conclusion that we ought to be vegetarian”. Regan claims that utilitarianism does not provide adequate grounds for the obligation to be a vegetarian. Actually he thought that the commitment to vegetarianism is so strong that he will prepare to abandon any ethical theory which is unable to produce the judgment that it is wrong to eat animals. Non-vegetarians may ask to vegetarians that, isn't the plant suffer too? We all know that plants are autotrophs, producing their own food, and we are heterotrophs, depends on other organisms to get our energy. Actually Vegetarians are primary consumers, they need less energy to create their own food, but whenever humans become secondary consumers- they require both plant food and animal food. Non- vegetarians are increased the number of plants used indirectly, through the feeding of animals who will be eaten by them. So, whenever, we destroy trees through the way of feeding animals that will be eaten by humans, we actually decrease the ability of the planet to handle the carbon dioxide released into the air.

In chapter five entitled: *Animal Ethics and Religion Debate* we will discuss the importance of animals in the field of religion. Religious traditions have often been the primary movers of a compassionate engagement with other lives. Thus, religion as a whole has an extraordinarily distinguished record of fostering the ethical abilities that are

the means by which humans can and often does care about other animals. The first of the central inquiries in the religion and animals field is, thus, about matters we generally call “ethical” or “moral”. So we will begin by considering what various religions have claimed about other animals. In Hindu theology, it is said that the animals, birds and different living entities are treated with respect and obligation, because God, the Supreme Being Himself was incarnated in the form of various species. Thus, the ancient religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism have never differentiated between the soul of a human being and the soul of an animal. Additionally, the sacred literature in Hinduism provides a wealth of animal characters that bring many species to the forefront of spiritual consciousness-often as equals. Some of those are as follows.

- The *Narasimha Purāṇa* describes that the first incarnation of Lord *Vishnu* is a fish. The second is a tortoise, then a boar, then *Bāli* - the king of the monkeys and so on.
- The **cycle of birth** in Hindu theological scriptures describes that a person may come back as an animal or a bird according to the type of merits and demerits one acquires through actions during his life span. This provides respect and noble sentiments towards these species.
- The *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti* goes in favor of not eating meat and the practice of giving up meat eating that support vegetarianism. The wicked persons who killed the animals , which are protected and domesticated , has to live in hell-fire (*ghora-narka*) for the days equal to the number of hairs of the body of that animal. Manusmṛiti, the basic law book of Hinduism considered animal killer as a murderer.
- In the *Śāntiparva of Mahābhārata* it is said that the life of a man and an animal is of equal value and impose the same punishment for the destruction of either of the forms of life.

Thus, religious traditions include an extraordinary variety of stories in which nonhuman animals are mentioned in some way, and these have great differences in tenor and purpose. Like Hinduism, Buddhism also holds that other species “are subject to the same process” that human being experience and living with the effects of karma from one birth to next. Buddhism also teaches *ahimsā*, they expressed the universal moral idea such as *metta* (loving-kindness), and *karuna* (compassion). The Buddhist thought does not only remain among social beings, rather it remains in mental and environmental world. Though we can see that many contemporary Buddhist eat meat today, but one thing is clear from the Buddhist teachings that the meaning of moral ideals is to reduce suffering that is flesh eating as well as drinking the nursing milk of factory-farmed animals which are fosters massive amounts of misery among millions of animals. So, those who believe in the teaching of Lord Buddha will be able to control their desires and live in harmony with nature keeping the environment in healthy condition. Apart from this every Muslims also agrees that tending *Allah*’s creation out of moral obligation to *Allah* is an act of religious devotion and earthy self-sacrifice that bears sweet fruits. The *Quran* teaches us that earth, and all that exist therein is not merely for human purposes, but for the benefit of all, and each created entity was purposefully designed and brought to life by *Allah*. Therefore, people who generally support an evolutionary view have tended to exclude animals from the moral domain. This narrow-minded assumption obviously needs to be reconsidered, and we will argue that animal morality is different in degree, not in kind, from human morality.

As a conclusive remark, we will reframe the views mentioned in all the chapters. What we have found that animal ethics is a field of study within environmental philosophy. Animals often have been classified as beings of nature, and in contemporary terminology they form an integral part of concepts central to environmental philosophy, such as ecosystems,

biodiversity, species, and environments. However, the link between animal ethics and environmental philosophy is complex: Animal ethics concentrates on individual animals and their value, whereas environmental philosophy traditionally has had more comprehensive (soils, waters, and plants as well as animals) and holistic (species, not specimens; biotic communities; ecosystems) concerns. Many animal ethicists, by contrast, maintain that animals should not be valued only as members of species or communities.

Moral standing indicates those individuals that moral agents must respect in certain separately determined ways. All human beings are assumed to have moral standing. Moral standing distinguishes entities that moral agents must treat with “minimum standards of acceptable behavior”. Entities who hold moral standing gain a certain moral status - their interests must be taken into consideration and this moral status carries ethical obligations. Moral agents, those of us capable of acting either morally or immorally, must respect those who have moral standing because entities with moral standing warrant, deserve, or merit moral consideration. Moral standing does not determine how an individual ought to be handled, only that there are guidelines that must be followed. According to Goodpaster moral status may be analyzed in the following ways.

Kenneth Goodpaster introduced the notion of moral considerability (which commonly referred to as “moral standing” in his 1978 article “On Being Morally Considerable.” he did not discuss moral *behaviour*, but focused on the requirements with regard to a particular entity that afford that entity moral standing, or moral considerability.

- First, moral considerability is not dependent on, and does not imply, moral rights. Moral rights are separate, narrower, and ancillary. In short, one cannot have *any* moral rights unless assessed as morally considerable. In order to be granted the right to life, for instance, an individual must first be deemed morally considerable.

- Second, the issue of moral considerability does not involve moral *significance* or the *weight* of that moral standing. Adjudicating competing moral claims is separate and ancillary. Moral considerability is all or none and determines but one thing: the presence of a privileged moral status—that of being morally considerable.
- Goodpaster distinguishes between what we are accustomed to (normative ethics) and what we are able to accomplish (practical ethics), as opposed to what we can ideally conceptualize. He defines “regulative” moral considerability as a situation in which an entity *is* morally considerable, but where that entity’s moral status is overlooked, or overridden, for practical reasons.

As we will see that philosophical discussion of moral status of animals has a long history. Many ancient Greeks, including Pythagoras and Plutarch, were vegetarians on primarily ethical grounds, and many later philosophers, such as Michel de Montaigne, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill, contemplated the normative dimensions of the human-animal relationship. In the nineteenth century, Henry Salt published a thesis on that topic in which he defended moral vegetarianism. In addition, serious discussion of moral status of animals and the normative elements of the human-animal relationship long existed on the margins of philosophy.

Morality requires that our sentiments be balanced with relevant facts and reason. Philosophy is a “human product”; each individual philosophizes with more than just reason - we use our will, feelings, “flesh and blood,” our “whole soul and . . . whole body”. We might wish moral philosophy to be a clean and neat process, predictable and dependable, with absolute answers to complex moral dilemmas, but nothing could be farther from the truth.

This is not to say that people do not have answers. Answers are provided by almost anyone confronted with delicate questions about

complicated moral matters. From abortion and addiction to capital punishment and war, people often believe they know what is right for themselves and for those around them. However, neither personal preference nor majority opinion makes a *sound* moral decision, though these definitely can and do determine a *dominant* (popular or common) morality. In fact, the definition of morals conflicts with the idea that what the majority approves is “right” and what the majority disapproves is “wrong.” While we are all familiar with the dominant morality of our time and place, the majority is much less aware of whether or not their common moral opinions are rooted in reason and empirical evidence.

Collectively, we participate in an outrageous moral inconsistency. We accept without question the discrepancy between our moral regard for human beings and our lack of moral regard for all other living entities. Lisa Kemmerer in *In Search of Consistency: Ethics and Animals* cites an example which may be significant to mention here. “When returning by car from my parent’s home some years back, I came upon a medic unit and a police car. A man was sitting on the bumper of one of the medic cars, with skinned knees. Two medics were attending him. He had gone around a corner too fast and had tipped his motorcycle in the street. I drove on, and within half an hour I watched a truck slam into the hind end of a doe. She was bounding, and as if in slow motion she flew from the front of the truck, spun in the air, and landed in a crumpled heap in the ditch. The truck kept going. The three cars behind the truck kept going. I was the fourth car behind the truck. I watched her try to stand up, her hind end destroyed. There were no medics, no police, not even a pause in the rushing of cars, though she was in shock and terribly wounded. How could a young man with skinned knees receive so much attention, while a doe who had been hit by a truck received no more than the passing glance as the people who had run over her rushed on their way? How many deer were hit that same night; how many of them

died slowly in ditches? And what of snakes, opossums, robins, raccoons, swallows, salamanders, and domestic cats and dogs? Can such a morality, where only human life is held to be worthy of preservation and protection, possibly be defensible?