

## **Chapter-1**

### **Introduction**

The word 'Ethics' is derived from the Greek word 'ethos' which means norms or character. Ethics may be briefly defined as 'the science of morality' or as 'the study of right conduct or duty'. It explains the facts of moral life and indicates the course in which human activities should be directed. Essentially, it is a philosophical investigation into the notions of good and bad, right and wrong, and the connected notion of duty, as applied to conduct or voluntary action.

Ethics may also be defined as 'the science of moral character expressing itself in right or wrong conduct or action', or as "the science that deals with the goodness and badness of human behavior and seeks to determine the ideally perfect type of character which it is the duty of all men to strive to realize within themselves". Thus, it may be said that Ethics is the study which deals with the moral ideal or standard, the supreme good or chief end of human activity and with those laws or regulative principles by conformity to which the supreme good is attained. The field of ethics deals with systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and behavior. Philosophers today, usually divide ethical theories into three general subjects such as Normative Ethics, Meta-ethics and Applied Ethics. Let us discuss in brief.

#### **1.1 Normative Ethics:**

Normative ethics is a branch of philosophical ethics, which takes on a more practical task, i.e. which moral standards regulate right and wrong conduct. This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or the consequences of our behaviour on other. It investigates a set of questions that arise when we think about the question "how ought one to act morally"? Normative ethics is distinct from Meta-ethics because it examines standards for the rightness and

wrongness of actions, while Meta-ethics studies the meaning of moral language and metaphysics of moral facts.

One branch of normative ethics is the theory of conduct; this is the study of right and wrong, of obligation and permissions, of duty, of what is above and beyond duty, and of what is so wrong as to be evil. Theories of conduct propose standards of morality, or moral codes or rules. The rules that a theory of conduct are as follows: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, “The right action is the action that produces the greatest happiness for the greatest number”. Theories of moral conduct can be distinguished from etiquette by their concern with finding guidelines for action that are not dependent entirely on social convention. For example, it may not be a breach of etiquette to fail to give money to help those in poverty, but it could still be a failure to act on morality.

Another branch of normative ethics is the theory of value; this looks at what things or which are deemed to be valuable. Suppose we have decided that certain things are intrinsically good, or are more valuable than other things that are also intrinsically good. Given this, the next question is what would this imply about how we should live our lives? The theory of value also asks: What sorts of things are good? What sorts of situations are good? Is pleasure always good? Is it good for people to be equally well off? Is it intrinsically good for beautiful objects to exist? Or what does “good” mean? It may literally define “good” and “bad” for a community or society. Let us discuss some of the normative ethical theories, in the following paragraphs.

A) Consequentialism (Teleology) argues that morality of an action is contingent on the action’s outcome or result. Some consequentialist theories include:

- Utilitarianism, which holds that an action is right if it leads to the most value for the greatest number of people (Maximizes value for all people).
  - Egoism, believes that the moral person is the self – interested person and holds that an action is right if it maximizes good for the self.
  - Situation Ethics, which holds that the correct action to take is the one which creates the most loving result, and that love should always be our goal.
- B) Deontology: Deontology argues that decisions should be made considering the factors of one's duties and other's rights. Deontological theories include:
- Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative, which roots morality in humanity's rational capacity and averts certain inviolable moral laws.
  - The Contractarianism of John Rawls and Thomas Hobbes, which holds that the moral acts, are those that we would all agree to if we were unbiased.
  - Natural rights theories, of Thomas Aquinas or John Locke, which holds that, human beings have absolute, natural rights.
- C) Virtue Ethics, which has been advocated by Aristotle, focuses on the inherent character of a person rather than on the specific actions that he or she performs. There has been a significant revival of virtue ethics in the past half century, through the work of philosophers like G.E.Moore, E. Anscombe, Phillipa Foot, A. Macintyre, Jane Austen, and Benjamin Franklin. But Anscombe's modern philosophy contributes a lot for the development of virtue ethics.

### **1.2 Meta-Ethics:**

Meta-ethics is the investigation of the nature of ethical statements. It involves questions like “are ethical claims true?” i.e., capable of being true or false, or “are they, expressions of emotion?” If they are true, are they true forever? If they are ever true, what is the nature of the facts that they express? And are they ever true absolutely or always only relative to some individual, society, or culture? Meta-ethics studies the nature of ethical sentences and attitudes. This includes such questions as what does “good” and “right” mean?, whether and how we know what is right and good?, whether moral values are objective?, and how ethical attitudes motivate us? Often this is derived from some lists of moral absolutes, e.g. a religious moral code, whether explicit or not, some would view aesthetics as itself a form of Meta ethics. Meta ethics also investigates where our ethical principles come from, and what they mean. Are they merely social inventions? Do they involve more expressions of our individual emotions? Meta ethical answers to these questions focus on the issues of universal truths, the will of God, the role of reason in ethical judgments, and the meaning of ethical terms themselves.

### **1.3 Applied Ethics:**

Applied ethics is a branch of ethics that considers the practical application of ethical principles to specific issues of social or personal concern, including medical ethics, professional ethics, and environmental ethics. Applied ethics is the philosophical examination, from a moral standpoint, of particular issues in private and public life that are matters of moral judgment. It is thus, a term used to describe attempts to use philosophical methods to identify the morally correct course of action in various fields of human life. Thus, applied ethics tries to provide guidance on specific issues within the context of a consistent notion of the elements of a good life. It is a discipline of philosophy that attempts to apply ethical

theory to real life situations. But it is not simply a matter of the application of ethical norms. Applied ethics also gives a special attention to humanity's specificity and the urgency of the situation in which the ethical issues arise. The distinctiveness of applied ethics lies in its particular and direct attention to those features. In fact, ethics as it has been understood traditionally, integrates both theoretical and the practical ethical concerns.

#### **1.4 Environmental Ethics:**

Environmental Ethics is a branch of Applied Ethics. According to the Penguin Dictionary of Biology, the word "environment" maybe defined as the 'collective term for the conditions in which an organism lives, both biotic and abiotic'. Environmental ethics is emerged as a new sub discipline of philosophy in the early 1970. It is a discipline that studies the moral relationship of human beings, and also the value and moral status of the environment and its nonhuman contents. Environmental ethics has given a new dimension to the conversation of natural resources. In wider sense 'environment' signifies the surroundings, which include the social, cultural and moral sphere. In its narrow sense, it includes the non human nature including plants and animals. Human and nature together constitute the environment. Thus, environment includes both human and nature and environment of human comprises of the relation between human and human and the relation between the human and nature. Environmental ethics believes in the ethical relationship between human beings and natural environment. Human beings are a part of society and so are the other living beings. When we talk about the philosophical principle that guides our life, we often ignore the fact that even plants and animals are a part of our lives. They are an integral part of the environment and hence have a right to be considered part of human life. It is clear that they need to be associated with our guiding principles as well as our moral and ethical values. There are

some basic premises in environmental ethics that govern human-nonhuman relationship as follows:

- Human being is a part of nature.
- Our knowledge and understanding of the complexity, diversity, and interrelationship of life and living system remain rudimentary.
- The sustainability of our life support system is incompatible with current consumptive growth patterns and the rate of human population growth.
- Humans have altered the natural system of the Earth to such an extent that much extinction have already taken place and the existence of countless species, including our own, is in jeopardy.
- Human beings need to have a profound respect for nonhumans in all its diverse manifestation.
- All species are unique and have value regardless of any value that they may have for humans.

### **1.5 Animal Ethics:**

Our attitude towards animals has changed over the centuries. In ancient period, people believed in mythical relationships between humans and animals. Greek mythology abounded in half human, half-animal creatures. Animals were worshipped and deified, while, at the same time being cruelly treated. This ambivalent approach was due to the fact that animals were people's daily food, often obtained without consideration of pain. Animals were forced to participate in cruel forms of entertainment, and with the development of science they have also become subjects of experiments and vivisection tests.

At the same time, philosophical attempts were also made to define 'humanity'. The differences between humans and animals were attributed to the lack of a soul in animals, which was considered to prevent them from having a consciousness or mind. This excluded animals from the sphere of morality, as they were denied the possibility of having any form of

consciousness, any ability to feel or think, and even of having an embryonic form of mental life.

This was the dominant approach in most philosophical schools and the exceptions were very rare. However, the Pythagoreans believed in the transmigration of souls, i.e. metempsychosis. According to this view, the souls of the dead not only enter humans, but also animal bodies. For this reason, Pythagoras and his disciples declared that killing and eating animals was as outrageous as cannibalism. Empedocles in c. 495-435 B.C., declared that eating meat and making blood offerings were the greatest of sins. Later on, Diogenes, Plotinus, Ovid, Seneca and Porphyry expressed similar views. Plutarch even suggested that animals were more intelligent than humans and could demonstrate moral virtues. Also, from the earliest of times, the idea of the unity and sanctity of all life was accepted in the East, as was the belief in reincarnation, which claimed that a soul could enter both human and animal bodies alike. In the 3rd century B.C., inspired by the ideas of Buddhism, the Indian king Ashoka issued edicts enforcing respect for the lives of all creatures. The edicts involved banning blood offerings, introducing medical care for animals, limiting the killing of animals to hunting, fishing and animal farming, and forbidding the killing of pregnant animals. The detail discussion is made in chapter-5.

In Christianity, Saint Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) and Saint Anthony of Padua (1195-1231) declared the idea of brotherhood with animals, which is called as 'minor brothers'. However, the main Christian trend rejected this idea that never became popular in the Church. A completely different standpoint was accepted by Aristotle, who is well known for his statement about the natural hierarchy of living creatures. Different beings should not be treated equally, as their innate nature is not the same. Humans, animals and plants are all capable of nutrition and growth. However, plants, as lower beings, should serve humans and animals,

and the latter should serve humans, as they cannot use reason to direct their behavior and are driven by instinct. By denying animals the capacity for rational thinking, Aristotle radically separated them from humans, which is discussed in chapter-2

Similar views were declared by Saint Augustine (350-430) and Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225- 1274). In their opinion, animals are creatures deprived of a rational soul and therefore cannot belong to the sphere of morality. By nature, animals should serve and be dependent on man. These opinions were shared by Albertus Magnus (c. 1193- 1280) and Saint Bonaventure (c. 1217-1274).

Several centuries later, a comparable point of view was accepted by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who excluded animals from ethical consideration, as they were believed to be incapable of rational thinking and deprived of free will. We can only have moral duties towards rational creatures (humans). Sympathy towards animals results not from concern for their well-being but from concern for human education, as humans could become insensitive to the suffering of other humans if they are cruel to animals.

In order to exclude animals from the ethical universe, they were denied not only the capacity for rational thinking but also the capacity for consciousness. According to René Descartes, animals are automatic devices which do not feel pain. He admitted that their behavior resembles that of humans, but they differ in that they do not have a conscious, rational God given soul. A similar way of thinking was represented by Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715). Although the philosopher Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) admitted that animals are able to feel, he did not consider that a reason to stop using them for our own convenience. French philosophers condemning the inhumane treatment of animals included Michel Montaigne, Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) and Jean- Jacques Rousseau. Montaigne

criticized human prejudices against animals, stating that we are subject to the same natural order of things as animals and have much in common with them.

Two centuries later, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) protested against the misery and maltreatment of animals, attributing their moral status not to reason but to an ability to feel pain and suffering. Voltaire (1694-1778) was also strongly opposed to the dehumanization of animals and vivisection. For the detail discussion we need to refer to chapter-2.

However, the ethical viewpoints mentioned above were based largely upon exclusionist assumptions which placed man outside/above nature in a privileged position in relation to animals. This conformed to a vision of hierarchical world order known as the 'Ladder of Beings' which was created by God and crowned man as master of all other creatures. Any form of mental life was ruled out as far as animals were concerned, and according to numerous thinkers, mental life was a necessary condition for moral status. In this view, animals were nothing more than living things, sources of raw material, medicine, food resources and cheap labor or the objects of hunting or bloody entertainment, regardless of the amount of pain or suffering they experienced. The publication of Darwin's theory of evolution in 1859 gradually led to the 'Ladder of Beings' theory being replaced by the evolutionary metaphor of the Tree of Life. From an evolutionary viewpoint, there are no greater or lesser forms of life and all life forms deserve respect. Human beings should not be considered exceptional.

If we go through the history of Animal Philosophy, then we find that generally, animal ethics is divided into three categories: the analytical school, the postmodern school, and the pragmatic school. Members of the analytical school investigate the relevant issues by reference to the familiar ethical theories and methods of modern Western philosophy. Standard moral theories such as utilitarianism, deontology (rights theory), social-contract

ethics, and virtue ethics have been applied to the animal issue to see if they could be extended to include nonhuman animals. The familiar commitments of modern Western moral philosophy to neutrality, universality, and consistency have given due care. Neutrality requires suspending a bias favoring fellow humans, universality requires that morality remain the same in all contexts, and consistency requires giving equal consideration to similar interests. The most common approach is to take a moral theory and apply it to other animals, often simultaneously amending the theory to make it more comprehensive. Tom Regan, for example, amended Immanuel Kant's deontology, substituting a robust subjective or conscious life for Kant's rationality criterion for moral rights. Just as theoretical backgrounds in the analytical school differ greatly, so do various theories in animal ethics. Perhaps the most common example is the conflict between orthodox utilitarianism, championed by Peter Singer, and modified Kantian deontology, championed by Tom Regan, as forms of animal ethics.

The majority of philosophical approaches which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters to animal ethics are of the analytical school. Philosophers who have used this approach include Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Mark Rowlands, Dale Jamieson, Bernard Rollin, Stephen Clark, James Rachels, and David DeGrazia. The postmodern school approaches animal ethics by reference to Continental and post-structural philosophy. In many ways this school is the opposite of the analytical school in that its proponents view neutrality, universality, and consistency with suspicion. The divide is meta-ethical in nature and can be traced back to the general divide that emerged in twentieth-century philosophy between Anglo-American philosophy and Continental philosophy.

Postmodernists think that neutrality and objectivity are impossible to achieve because humans are inextricably embedded in their specific epistemologies and perspectives. It is also maintained that values are not

universal but socially constructed. In practice this means that emphasis should be placed on explorations of various human perspectives; those explorations include how gender, ethnic identities, biologies, bodily-situatedness, and contexts affect values and understandings of animals. For instance, attention has been focused on reevaluating human identity from the animal perspective. Instead of concentrating on how humans view animals, emphasis is placed on how animals may view humans and the possible normative implications of such interspecific points of view. Also, postmodernists maintain that instead of reason and logic, emphasis should be placed on emotions such as awe, care, feelings of being bound, and other affective and intuitive responses.

The postmodern school is highly diverse, and not all its proponents share all of these characteristics. Philosophers who have used this approach include Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida. More specific to animal ethics, philosophers who use the postmodern and continental approaches include Cary Wolfe, David Wood, Matthew Calarco, Giorgio Agamben, and Ralph R. Acampora. Some ecofeminist approaches to animal ethics are similar in eschewing rationality, neutrality, universality, and consistency and embracing emotion, difference, context, and partiality. The most notable postmodern ecofeminists who have contributed to animal ethics include Val Plumwood, Carol Adams, Marti Kheel, Josephine Donovan, and Geeta Gaard; Vandana Shiva and Karen Warren also have touched on the animal issue. Many philosophers who have contributed to animal ethics deploy the insights and methods of both the analytical and postmodern schools by taking part in both, combining the two e.g., taking an analytical approach to postmodern works, or developing entirely new approaches. Those philosophers include Mary Midgley, Clare Palmer, and Steve Best.

Although Montaigne, Voltaire and Rousseau - as mentioned above - had already criticized the dehumanization of animals, the most important

attempts to win ethical treatment of animals were made by the founder of the ethical doctrine of utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham. The assumptions of utilitarian ethics have given rise to a significant conclusion. Inclusion in the sphere of morality depends on the ability to experience pleasure or pain, an ability which is referred to as 'sentience'. To quote Bentham, 'the question is not, Can they *reason*? Can they *talk*? But, Can they *suffer*?'

The 1970s witnessed a great breakthrough in the consideration of the moral treatment of animals and a milestone was marked by the publication of the book *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer. Singer's book, which became the animal liberation movement's 'Bible', has since been a source of inspiration for defenders of animal welfare. According to Singer, if we object to sexual and racial discrimination, we cannot adhere to speciesism. Speciesism means discrimination based on membership to a species. A detail discussion is made in chapter-2.

Singer maintains that the ability to feel in some animals is comparable to the same ability in people. This implies that animals have 'interests' and therefore should be included in the sphere of morality. Singer argues that humans have different levels of intelligence, talents and aesthetic and moral sensitivity, especially when we consider people who are deprived of those capabilities, such as young children or mentally handicapped persons. Such people are nevertheless protected by the principle of equality. So far as animals are concerned, we commit the arbitrary act of excluding them from the 'moral community'. Singer criticizes this attitude and labels it as speciesism. According to Singer, to a greater or lesser degree, a six-month old human baby does not have any characteristics that an adult mammal does not have. His aim is to weigh up total pleasure against suffering for moral assessment purposes, regardless of whether the pleasure or suffering is experienced by animals or people. Indeed, the findings of modern ecology, ethology and animal psychology as well as sociobiology have

shown that certain animals have a mental life and an ability to communicate, consciously use tools, cooperate and help one another. It is even possible that they have a sense of humor.

In the second chapter entitled: *Moral Status of Animals: Traditional and Recent Debates* we have discussed the philosophical debates among Western philosophers on the moral status of animals. Some classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle described human beings as rational animals and identified reason as a distinguishing mark and implied that our mental life exists at an altogether higher level in comparison to other animals. According to Hume, we are distinct from animals by virtue of our status as moral agents, reflects an important feature of his concept of person or self. Even, Wittgenstein also thought that only human beings are capable of using language, and even if a lion could speak we could not understand him. On the contrary, there are some philosophers also who thought that species are not only mere automata; they have also self-conscious, rationality and so on. Say for example, Peter Singer, who suggested that each individual and each species is different but they all have interests and equal interests ought to be treated equally. Regan, Singer, and Taylor soundly demonstrate that species is not a morally relevant criterion; any moral theory that draws distinctions based purely on species is untenable. 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. Due to the absence of any morally relevant distinction between humans and animals, the rejection of a hierarchy of moral standing among humans ought to be extended to other species. If infants and the brain dead are morally considerable, if their lives are to be protected and preserved, then consistency and impartiality require that the lives of each living entity that is not different in morally relevant ways also be protected all life forms. Pain and suffering are morally

relevant. Causing pain and suffering to others is morally reprehensible when such suffering is not in their interest and when such suffering is avoidable.

In chapter three entitled: *Animals in Research and Animal Welfare* an attempt has been made to discuss the issues in the use and abuse of animals in research. In fact, animal studies are conducted first to give medical researchers a better idea of what benefits and complications they are likely to use in humans. In this chapter, we have discussed that whether an animal experiment is ethically justified? We have also tried to point out that the use of animals in research can be ethically and morally justified as the benefits of animal research have been enormous and it would have severe consequences for public health and medical research if it were abandoned. Nevertheless, the use of the 3Rs i.e, reduction, replacement and refinement is crucial to continuously reduce the number and suffering of animals in research. Furthermore, a good regulatory regime - as found in some countries - can help to reduce further the number of animals used. Therefore, we support a healthy and continued debate on the use of animals in research. We recognize that those who oppose animal experimentation should be free to voice their opinions democratically, and we look forward to constructive discussion in the future with organizations that share the middle ground with us.

In chapter four entitled *Vegetarianism and Living Well* we have discussed that if we accept that animals have rights then killing animals for food is morally wrong. Vegetarianism on moral grounds may be understood as the view that because of some moral principles one ought not to eat certain edible animals and animal products. There are many philosophical arguments for veganism which underestimate what is at stake for humans who give up eating animal products. By saying all that's at stake for humans is taste and characterizing taste in simplistic terms, they underestimate the reasonable resistance that arguments for veganism will meet. Taste, they

believe, is trivial. Omnivores believe that eating meat provides a more meaningful meal, though just how this works proves elusive. Meaningful omnivores could find little in the philosophical literature to help them clarify and support their position until recently. A few philosophers have argued that our culinary practices involve something more significant than taste. Even if when vegan and omnivorous diets impose similar harms on animals, moral vegans might live better than meaningful omnivores if they pay attention to aesthetics, engagement with the world, and identity. Creative transformations of previously omnivorous identities add a new layer of meaningfulness. Being an omnivore is one way of eating meaningfully, but no more than that, which means that the meaningfulness of eating meat can't justify imposing harms on animals. Where things are equal for the animals and a vegan diet would impose as much harm on animals as an omnivorous one, and then perhaps the meaningful omnivore has a case. When and where all things are equal in this sense is difficult to determine, but it's clearly a different argument - one about the harms animals suffer.

In chapter five entitled *Animal Ethics and Religion* an attempt has been made to discuss that how the religious believers have lived out their faith in ways that have been fully in defense of non-human lives. Religion can affect our attitude towards animals and the way in which animals are treated by us. We have also discussed how animal experimentation was considered from Indian civilization. In ancient Indian society, in the case of animal taxonomies an analogy is often used between the classes of beasts and the classes in the society. There are social and cultural classificatory schemes which are represented as natural, because they reproduce the schemes where by animals are classified. In fact there are several and different methods for classifying animals in Vedic texts. 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.

They believed that everything that has been created by Supreme Being or *Brahman* comes from the Supreme Being and again returns to the Supreme Being. We tried to show that because, religious institutions have so much influence in cultures across the earth-worldwide, only about one-seventh of people count themselves as non-religious-religions have within their grasp an important leadership role regarding our relationship to the world around us. An increasing number of religious and non-religious humans have echoed some form of insight that “we cannot be truly ourselves in any adequate manner without all our companion beings throughout the earth. This larger community constitutes our greater self.” Whether believers, churches and religious institutions will respond to this challenge remains an unanswered question.

As a conclusive remark, we have tried to find out some dimensions from the all the debates and try to establish that it has been obvious for a long time that the pursuit of global justice requires the inclusion of many people and groups not previously included as fully equal subjects of justice: the poor; members of religious, ethnic, and racial minorities; and more recently women, the disabled, and inhabitants of poor nations distant from one’s own. But a truly global justice requires not simply looking across the world for fellow species members who are entitled to a decent life. It also requires looking around the world at the other sentient beings with whose lives our own are inextricably and complexly intertwined. Kant’s approach does not confront these questions as questions of justice. Probably a strict Kantian could not so confront them, not without considerably modifying Kant’s own view about rationality as the basis of moral respect. Utilitarian approaches boldly confront the wrongs animals suffer, and they deserve high praise. But in the end, it seems that, Utilitarianism is too homogenizing - both across lives and with respect to the heterogeneous constituents of each life - to provide us with a fully adequate theory of animal justice.

The capabilities approach may, however, distinguish two aspects of the capability in question. A tiger's capability to kill small animals, defined as such, does not have intrinsic ethical value, and political principles can omit it. But a tiger's capability to exercise its predatory nature so as to avoid the pain of frustration may well have value, if the pain of frustration is considerable. Zoos have learned how to make that distinction. Noticing that they were giving predatory animal's insufficient exercise for their predatory capacities, they have had to face the question of the harm done to smaller animals by allowing such capabilities to be exercised. Should they give a tiger a tender gazelle to crunch on? The people in some zoos have found that they can give the tiger a large ball on a rope, whose resistance and weight symbolize the gazelle. The tiger seems satisfied. Wherever predatory animals are living under direct human support and control, such solutions seem the most ethically sound. The capabilities approach, which begins from an ethically attuned concern for each form of animal life, offers a model that does justice to the complexity of animal lives and their strivings for flourishing. Such a model seems an important part of a fully global theory of justice.

To say that a being deserves moral consideration is to say that there is a moral claim that this being has on those who can recognize such claims. A morally considerable being is a being who can be wronged in the morally relevant sense. It is generally thought that all and only human beings make such claims, however, when we ask why it is thought that all and only humans are the types of beings that can be wronged, answers are not particularly easy to come by. Humans are members of the species *Homo sapiens*. But species membership does not explain why there is a moral claim made by those that belong to this species and not other species. That humans are members of the species *Homo sapiens* is certainly a distinguishing feature of humans - humans shares a genetic make-up and a

distinctive physiology, but this is unimportant from the moral point of view. Species membership is a morally irrelevant characteristic, a bit of luck which is no more morally interesting than being born male or female, black or white. Thus, species membership itself cannot support the view that members of one species, namely ours, deserve moral consideration that is not owed to members of other species. Of course, one might respond that it is not membership in a biological category that matters morally, it is our humanity that grounds the moral claims we make. Humans are morally considerable because of the distinctively human capacities we possess, capacities that only we humans have. Becoming a vegetarian is not merely a symbolic gesture rather a vegetarian is the most practical and effective steps one can take towards ending both the killing of non-human animals and the infliction of suffering upon them. We may suggest that given the various virtues of animal ethics we have discussed, working towards a happy, peaceful life and meatless diet in a community is a worthy endeavour for a person who values compassion, humility, and integrity. Working towards this larger community constitutes our greater self. Whether believers, non-believers and religious institutions will respond to this challenge remains an unanswered question.