

Introduction to Animal Ethics

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Interacting with animals. The issue of research and testing

- Because of evolutionary continuities in the form of behavioural, anatomical, physiological, neurological, biochemical & pharmacological similarities between animals & humans, that is because animals share many physiological & genetic similarities with humans, animal experimentation can be conducive to furthering biological & medical knowledge and its applications.

Uses of animals in research

- Basic biological, behavioural or psychological research (e.g. DNA replication, mitochondrial activity...)
- Applied basic biomedical and psychological research (testing of hypotheses about diseases, genetic dysfunctions, testing new therapies)
- Development of drugs and therapeutic chemicals (aiming at discovering specific substances for specific purposes and knowledge as such)
- Food and fibre research
- Testing of consumer goods for safety, toxicity, irritation
- Use in educational institutions
- Use for extraction of drugs and biological products (vaccines, serum, blood, monoclonal antibodies..)

Animal GM technology

Actual & potential uses of transgenic animals

In medicine and medical research:

- to improve genetic and physiological knowledge
- to make models for human diseases and gene therapy
- to produce at lower cost proteins to be used for therapeutic purposes
- to provide source of organs or tissues for xenotransplantation, and so on..

also:

In agriculture and agronomical research, such as:

- new knowledge about the function of genes
- new knowledge about control of cell differentiation
- cheaper products
- new health products (vaccines, pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals)
- conservation of endangered species (preservation of genetic variability of a population)

CRISPR's affordability and efficiency could overshadow long-standing concerns about the generation and release of genetically modified organisms.

Multifarious applications regarding non-human organisms :

- (a) Some research projects require animal lines that are specifically bred for certain mutations. **Here standing classical ethical issues such as animal welfare apply.**
- (b) To improve food for human consumption (eg. increase muscle mass of animals)- **controversial**
- (c) Potential eradication of disease by eradicating disease vectors & invasive species- **controversial**
- (d) Powerful tool in synthetic biology to generate micro-organisms for many applications (biofuels, remediation of pollution...)- **controversial**
- (e) Risks of **misapplications**. Bioterrorism, biowarfare...

Ethical Concerns

- Use of animals in research. **Moral doubts about invasive animal use in research and testing.** (P. Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 1975). Challenging the moral permissibility of harming animals to advance scientific knowledge.
- **The debate:**
 - (i) **Proponents** of animal research in terms of scientific & medical benefits;
 - (ii) **Critics of animal experimentation** arguing that results of biomedical experiments on animals **are not transferable** to humans;
 - (iii) **Critics on moral grounds:** sentience and the unacceptability of causing pain, suffering, distress, lasting harm, death- independently of benefit;
 - (iv) **Mild positions** questioning whether all uses are equally necessary & justifiable (toxicity testing & basic research)-it is imperative to exhaust the potential of other methods not using animals.

Utilization and care of vertebrate animals in testing, research, training

- The “Justification Rule”:
Clear benefits to come from research, whether it is a diagnosis, treatment, prevention, or some other benefit to humans or animals . *Balancing benefits vs. harms.*
- Balancing scientific progress and animal welfare
(EU directive 2010/63)
- Ethical issues.
The use of animals generates moral concerns.
- The issue of animal welfare.

Animal welfare

- A state of harmony between the body of the non-human animal and its environment, in which the former seeks to meet its physiological **needs** through adaptation, aided by good health and environmental opportunities .
- Developing technologies that promote both the diagnosis of conditions of AW and alternatives to mitigate the effects of captivity, supporting the appropriate use of animals, and recognizing the guidelines of the 3Rs: *reduction, replacement, refinement*.
(improvement in performing cognitive tasks, improving results of research in health & learning).

Do animals count morally and why? The issue of moral status

- Use and abuse of animals in scientific research.
- The moral divide between humans and non-humans.
- Criteria of moral considerability – moral status. Who is to count?

The contribution of Bioethics

Bioethics emerged, around the mid 1970s, from pressing social concerns for a critical re-evaluation of **criteria of action** in the era of biotechnology. It aims at a critical investigation of the implications of advances in the bio-medical sciences and biotechnologies for human life and the natural environment (including treatment of non-human animals).

Subject matter: the *normative investigation* of moral challenges resulting from the social integration of biomedical advances and biotechnology.

Animal ethics: subfield of Bioethics

Bioethics Subfields

- Medical Ethics
- Ethics of Research (including **animal experimentation**)
- **Environmental Ethics** (including **Animal Ethics**)

Some spheres of concern

- Ethics of (bio-medical, genetic) research involving human and non-human animal beings
- Environment (the inter-relation between health & environment).

Approaches in animal ethics:

(i) Intrinsic worth-moral realism

- The issue of anthropocentrism and speciesism.
- Against moralizing nature.
- “Non-anthropocentric” realist eco-centric ethic: there are value- conferring properties in nature.

Aldo Leopold “ecosystem”

Albert Schweitzer “will to live”

Arne Naess “deep ecology”

Murray Bookchin “social ecology”

Aldo Leopold, “land ethic”:

- That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics (Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* , 1949: vii–ix).
- A thing is right when it tends to preserve *the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community*. It is wrong when it tends otherwise. (Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949: 224–5).

Arne Naess “deep ecology movement”:

- “**Biospheric egalitarianism**”: all living things are alike in having value in their own right, independent of their usefulness to others. The deep ecologist respects this intrinsic value, taking care, for example, when walking on the mountainside not to cause unnecessary damage to the plants.
- “**Self-realization**” as the reconnection of the human individual with the wider natural environment.

(“The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement”, *Inquiry*, 16, 1973. *Ecology, Community, Lifestyle*, 1989).

Murray Bookchin's "social ecology":

- The "outer" physical world constitutes "first nature", from which culture or "second nature" has evolved. Agents can choose to put themselves at the service of natural evolution, help maintain complexity and diversity, diminish suffering and reduce pollution. We ought to use our capacities of **sociability, communication and intelligence** as if we were "nature rendered conscious", in favour of a richer form of life devoted to nature's preservation (as opposed to its destruction).

(Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society*, 1980. "Social Ecology Versus Deep Ecology", *Green Perspectives: Newsletter of the Green Program Project*, numbers 4, 5, 1987. *The Philosophy of Social Ecology*, 1990).

(ii) Sentience- Animal welfare

“Other animals, which, on account of their interests having been neglected by the insensibility of the ancient jurists, stand degraded into the class of *things*.[...]The day may come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny[..] It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of legs, the villousity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum* [*sacred bone, ιερὸν οστούν*], are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps, the faculty for discourse? [...]the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?”

(**Jeremy Bentham**, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals & Legislation* 1781)

Utilitarians: Bentham, Mill, P.Singer

- P. Singer: What matters morally are the *strength and nature of interests*, not whose interests these are. So, if the only options available in order to save the life of one morally considerable being is to cause harm, but not death, to another morally considerable being, then according to a utilitarian position, causing this harm may be morally justifiable. Similarly, if there are two courses of action, one which causes extreme amounts of suffering and ultimate death, and one which causes much less suffering and painless death, then the latter would be morally preferable to the former (case of factory farming: *the conditions animals are raised and slaughtered cause vast amounts of suffering greater than humans satisfaction*).

Interests as scalar

- If there is a conflict of interests, **crucial** interests will always override **important** interests, important interests will always override **replaceable** interests, etc. So if an animal has an interest in not suffering, which is a crucial interest, or at least an important one, and a person has an interest in eating that animal when there are other things to eat, meaning that that interest is *replaceable*, then the animal has the *stronger interest*, and it would be wrong to violate that interest by killing the animal for food, if there is another source of food available.
- **Thus, some laboratory experiments may be permitted (satisfying crucial or important interests)**
- Problems with utilitarian approaches.

(ii) Being subject of a life (intrinsic value of life)- animal rights

Subjects of a life want and prefer things, believe and feel things, recall and expect things. And all these dimensions of our life, including our pleasure and pain, our enjoyment and suffering, our satisfaction and frustration, our continued existence or our untimely death—all make a difference to the *quality of our life as lived, as experienced, by us as individuals. As the same is true of ... animals ... they too must be viewed as the experiencing subjects of a life, with inherent value of their own* (Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, 1985).

(iii) Virtue ethics approaches

- Actions affecting animals are subject to moral scrutiny based not on rational argumentation but features of *moral experience*.
- Animals are individuals with whom we share a common life. Eating animals is wrong because, in eating animals or using them in other harmful & violent ways, we do not display the *traits of character that kind, sensitive, compassionate, mature, and thoughtful members of a moral community should display*.
- One interested in living a virtuous life will change one's attitudes and reject treating animals as food or tools for research.

(Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, 2001 [esp. ch. 11, 13],
Stephen R.L Clarke, *The Moral Status of Animals*, 1977)

Rosalind Hursthouse:

“I began to see [my attitudes] that related to my conception of flesh-foods as unnecessary, greedy, self-indulgent, childish, my attitude to shopping and cooking in order to produce lavish dinner parties as parochial, gross, even dissolute. I saw my interest and delight in nature programmes about the lives of animals on television and my enjoyment of meat as side by side at odds with one another...Without thinking animals had rights, I began to see both the wild ones and the ones we usually eat as **having lives of their own, which they should be left to enjoy.** And so I changed. My *perception* of the moral landscape and where I and the other animals were situated in it shifted” (R. Hursthouse, *Ethics, Humans and Other Animals*, 2000: 165–166).

Overall:

- There is a hierarchy of moral importance with humans at the apex, followed by primates and then other mammalian species such as pigs, dogs, rats and mice and other vertebrates such as zebrafish, with invertebrates (for example fruit flies) and single-celled creatures arranged towards the bottom (**the moral sliding scale view**).
- Morally relevant features:
 - sentience
 - higher cognitive capacities
 - the capacity to flourish
 - sociability
 - possession of a life (subjects of a life)
 - traits of character, moral perception

Functional role of moral considerations.

Are morally relevant criteria absolutely constraining or factors to be balanced?

- Consequentialism (weighing consequences, i.e. costs and benefits in the name of interests).
- Intrinsic worth: absolute abolition of all laboratory research involving animals, as their use in experimental procedures violates their intrinsic value.
- Rights-based prohibitions: to experiment on animals is to violate the animal's rights.
- Virtue ethics prohibitions.
- Obligation-based approaches.

Clash of perspective regarding use of animals in research

- Outcomes:

Benefits can outweigh harms

vs.

- Intrinsic concerns:

Animals are not means to ends

vs.

- Moral life particularisms

vs.

- Is there a third way?

Avoiding anthropomorphism (eg. utilitarianisms, rights-based discourse) and speciesism.

(iv) Agency-based approaches

“If a man shoots his dog because the animal is no longer capable of service, he does not fail in his duty to the dog, for the dog cannot judge, but his act is inhuman and damages in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind. If he is not to stifle his human feelings, he must practice kindness towards animals, for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men” (Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, 212 (Academie ed., 27: 459)).

- From recipience to agency.

We are moral animals

- “Because we have the capacity to evaluate the influence of our instincts, desires, emotions and attachments on our actions, we are not completely governed by them. We have the capacity to be governed instead by normative standards and values, **by a conception of what we ought to do**”. We are moral animals (Christine Korsgaard, *Sources of Normativity*, 1996, et al).
- We are **normatively self-governing agents**. To be normatively self-governing an entity must be able to choose its own ends. Animals live according to their natures not according to their values or their free choices or their personal conceptions of what is good.

Extending moral scope. An emerging ethical awareness

Against animal suffering. Legislation in all major countries on both sides of the Atlantic (control of pain and suffering, enriching proper living environment and assuring proper care).

- ✓ That animals are used in research only when it is absolutely necessary (no other alternatives).
- ✓ That when animals are used in research they are humanely treated.

When can animals be used?

- When confirmation has been made that research activities are not unnecessarily duplicating previously conducted experiments. Procedures selected that:
- (a) use the minimum number of animals, (b) involve animals with the lowest capacity to experience pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm, (c) cause the least pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm, and are most likely to provide satisfactory results.

Morally responsible research

- Researchers have an ethical responsibility to treat animals humanely.
- They also have an ethical responsibility to avoid or minimize the pain and distress animals endure .
- *The three R's. Moral Restrictions.*
 - Reduce* the number of animals used to a minimum.
 - Refine* the way experiments are carried out, to make sure animals suffer as little as possible.
 - Replace* animal experiments with non-animal techniques wherever possible.

(Russell and R.L. Burch, *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*, 1959).

Procedural principles- systems

- A system of authorization of people, places, projects.
- Ethical, impartial and independent evaluation of projects by an independent body.
- Training and competence. Common training standards across EU.

EU directive 2010: The ultimate goal is full replacement of procedures on live animals for research & education, as soon as it is scientifically possible. In the meantime methods such as mathematical models, computer simulation, in vitro biological systems should also be considered.

- Standards of **scientific integrity**, decisions pertaining to animal welfare and responsible care & use.

- An enlarged *procedural consensus*:

Consensus that certain democratic procedures are justified, such as a **system of licensing and control of animal research** that is deemed necessary, by fine tuning the regulations, relaxing some restrictions and introducing others.

Publicity, transparency, accountability.

- - All involved need to be able to have access to relevant information about research involving animals, such as the goals, welfare implications and alternatives to research, in order to judge whether specific types of research are justifiable in respect of their normative frameworks.
- - The discussion about appropriate policies must be conducted in a *fair and informed manner*, which permits all reasonable participants to argue their case.
- - There must be a genuine possibility for policies to be readjusted. For this to be achieved, there must be **public engagement and dialogue involving scientists, policy makers & the public.**

Extended moral concern.

Animals are not mere things

- Korsgaard: “what we demand, when we demand ... recognition, is that our natural concerns—the objects of our natural desires and interests and affections—be accorded the status of values, values that must be respected as far as possible by others. And many of those natural concerns—the desire to avoid pain is an obvious example—spring from our animal nature, not from our rational nature” (“Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror,” *Harvard Review of Philosophy*, 16, 2007).

- To see the world from the moral point of view is to be able to regard it as a **“collective possession of all its inhabitants.”** Whenever we ourselves make claims of right, a commitment to dealing fairly with other inhabitants of the planet is implicit in those claims.



Thank you for your attention