

Living Together with Animals

Ethics
Matters

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Introduction

We interact with animals in many different ways

- pets
- food
- clothing
- zoos
- leather goods
- medicines, shampoos, etc.
- hunting

Religious Traditions

Christianity

Buddhism and Hinduism

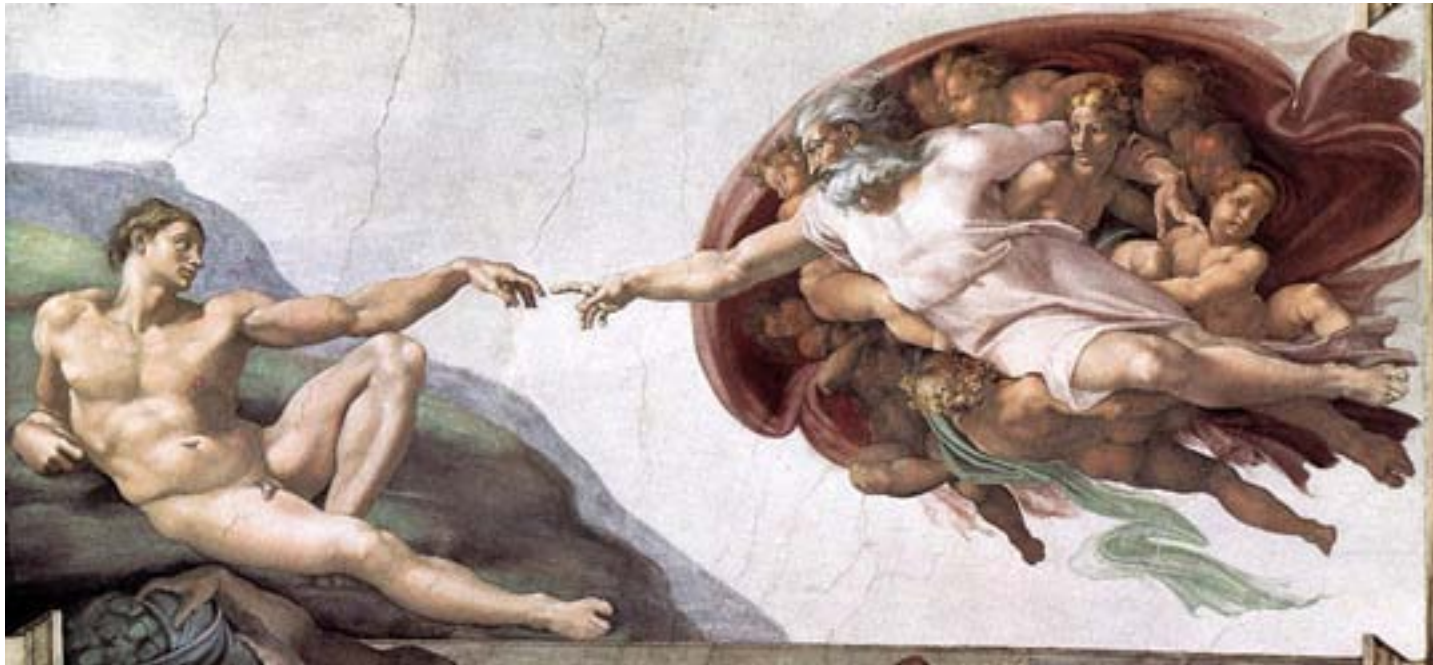
Native American Traditions

Christianity

Two Traditions in Christianity:

- Human beings as dominating the earth
- Human beings as stewards of the earth

Christianity: The Domination Tradition



The natural world is seen only as instrumental to salvation

Christianity: The Stewardship Tradition

St. Francis of Assisi symbolizes the tradition that sees human beings as stewards of creation, charged with the responsibility of protecting the natural world.



The Ontological Gap between Humans and Animals in Christianity

The Soul

- Human beings have immortal soul, animals don't.
- Consequently, animals belong on a different ontological level than human beings, and the gap is unbridgeable.
- There is no matter of degree here: either human or not. The same way of thinking occurs in the abortion debate.

The Incarnation

- Because of the incarnation, great ontological gap between human beings and all other natural beings because God became a human being (Jesus) and not any other kind of living being.

Hinduism

In Hinduism, Gods are often depicted in the form of animals—e.g., Ganesh, the Elephant God.

Souls may transmigrate to animals.

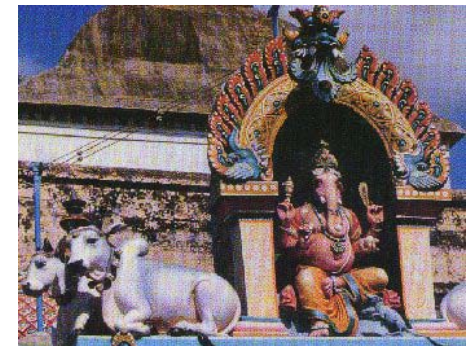
Consequently, if you mistreat an animal, you may be mistreating the soul of one of your ancestors.



4/21/08

Sacred cows:

Living with Animals



Buddhism

Compassion and respect for life

- A consistent ethic of respect for life

Reincarnation

- Human souls may be reborn as animals, thus the possibility of a much smaller gap between human and animal worlds



Native American Traditions: The Navajo and the Hopi

Harmony (*hozho*)

emphasizes a balanced
relationship of respect

Emphasis on everything
having its proper place

Killing animals is not wrong, but killing them
unnecessarily is.



Conclusion: Animals & Religion

These non-Christian religious traditions suggest a different way of understanding the relationship among humans, animals, and the divine.

Instead of a huge ontological gulf between human and animals, these other religious traditions suggest a more porous line between the human and the animal (transmigration of souls) and between the animal and the divine (gods like Ganesh).

Models of the Relationship between Humans and Animals

Animals as Objects of Use

Animals as Objects of Respect

Animals as Rights Holders

Animals as Objects of Use: Unrestrained

Animals are seen merely as being *objects* available for humans to use

Origins:

- Christianity
- Technology

Animals as Objects of Use: Restrained

Animals are still seen primarily as objects to be used by human beings, but moral considerations constrain this use

We must treat animals humanely or else we diminish ourselves

Animals as Objects of Respect

In this view, animals--and their pain--are seen as having some moral standing in the human world, even if it is not equivalent to human standing.

We are urged to reduce animals suffering unless there is a strong human benefit for such suffering (e.g., medical research with animals).

Animals as Rights Holders

Animals are seen as holders of rights

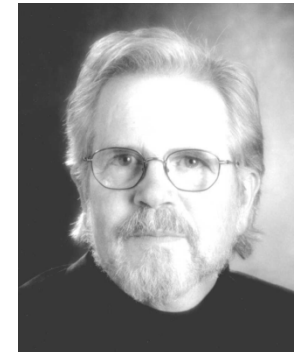
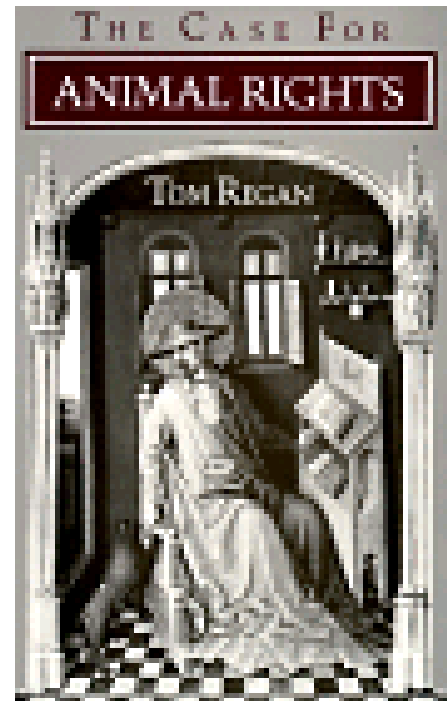
- What entitles a being to rights?
 - Some rights-conferring characteristic
 - intelligence
 - sentience
 - soul
- What rights do animals have?
 - Life
 - Life in natural habitat

Considerations about Rights

Who has rights?
On what basis?

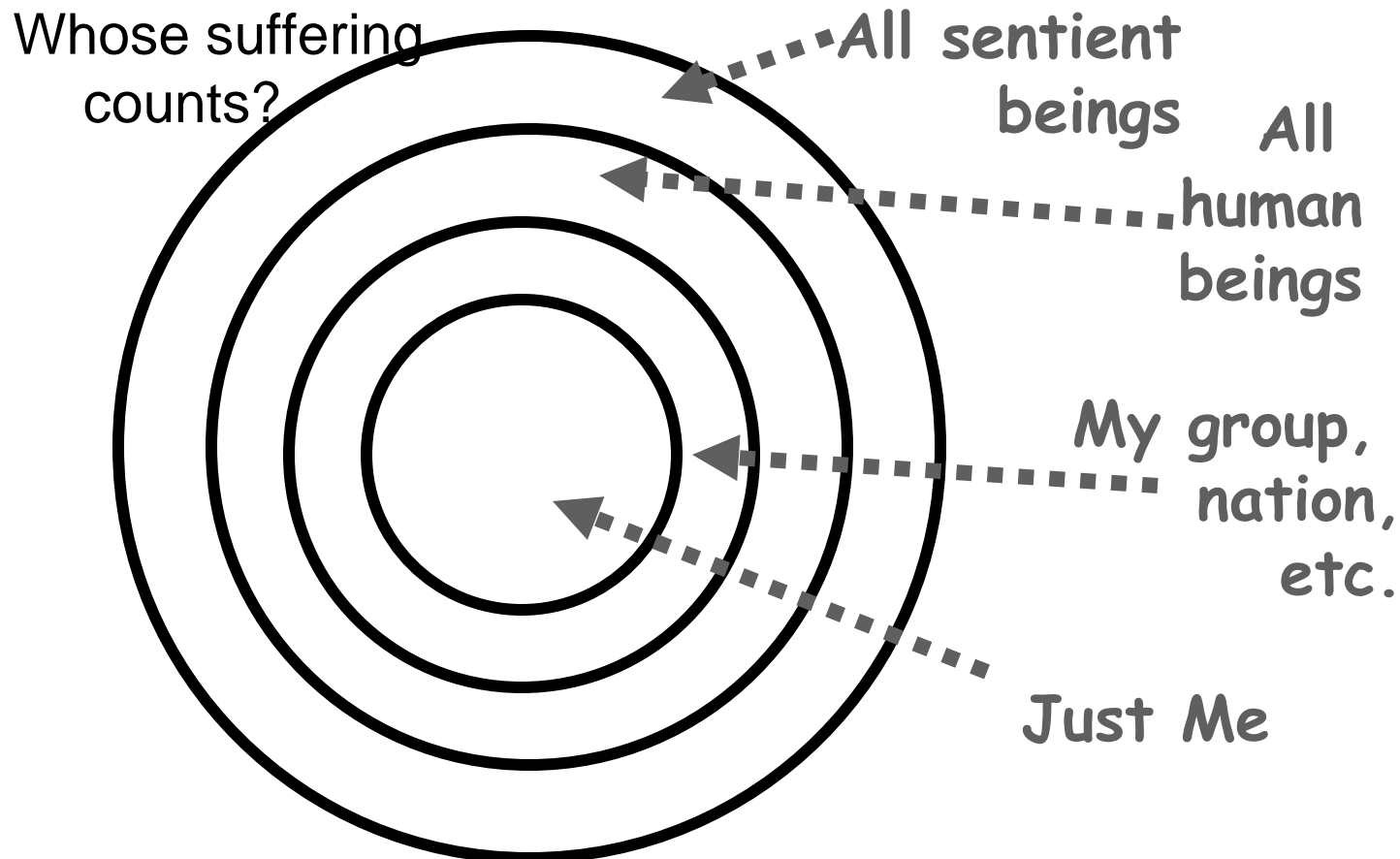
- Rationality
- Soul
- Ability to suffer
- Ability to have a future

How do we adjudicate
conflicts of rights?



Tom Regan, *Animal Rights*

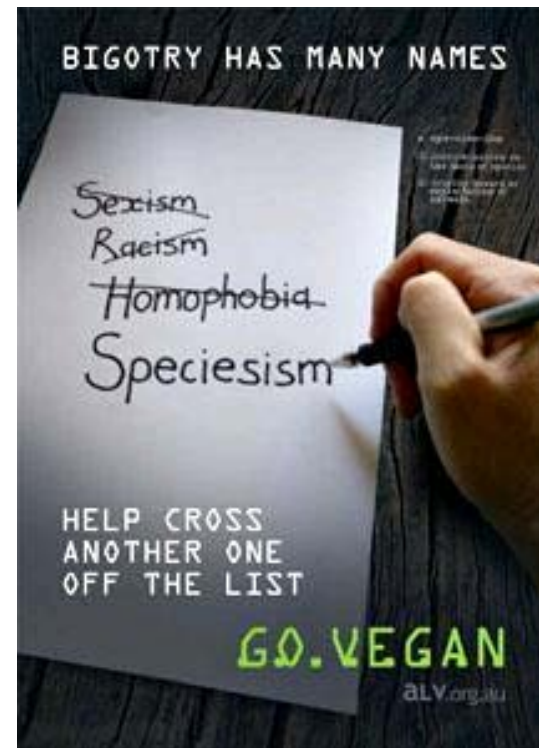
Consequentialist Considerations



Speciesism

Defenders of animal rights often maintain that those who disagree with them are guilty of “speciesism,” i.e., the view that we arbitrarily grant human beings rights that we do not accord to animals.

Some opponents of animal rights accept this label but find nothing objectionable about it.



The Argument from Compassion for Suffering

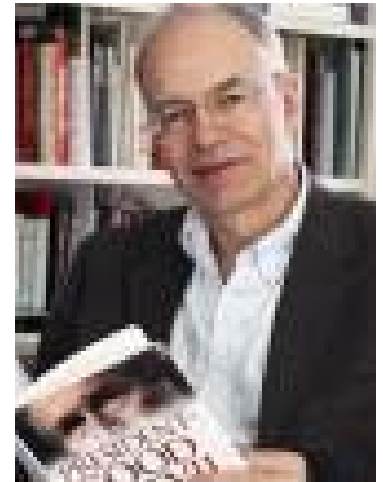
Some arguments against the killing of animals appeal primarily to our compassion for the suffering of animals.

"The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? But rather, Can they suffer?"

--Jeremy Bentham, 19th century Philosopher, Oxford University

- **"All the arguments to prove man's superiority can not shatter this hard fact: In suffering, the animals are our equals."**

--Peter Singer - *Animal Liberation*



Compassion for Suffering

The exact argument here is not clear, but it seems to be that, if animals suffer as a result of our actions, then we should refrain from those actions.

Questions:

- Would killing animals be permissible if they felt no fear or pain?
- Might alternatives sometimes produce more pain—e.g., animal experimentation to develop human life-saving drugs.

The Argument from Health

Another argument against eating animals is that vegetarianism is healthier.

The argument seems to have this structure:

- Eating meat causes many health problems
- Vegetarianism/Vegan does not cause health problems
- We should avoid meat and be vegetarians/Vegans.

Questions:

- Should we always do what is maximally healthy?
- Who should get to decide?

The Argument from Animal Intelligence

Some animals exhibit a high level of intelligence that requires a new level of human consideration.

Do we need to treat highly intelligent animals differently than less intelligent animals?

Animal Rights and Abortion

One's position on animal rights may have interesting implications for one's position on abortion.

If an entity has rights solely on the basis of its ability to experience pain, and if the fetus can experience pain, then it may have rights, even though it may not be accepted as human.

Concerns about Character

Compassion

Proximity--do we just not want to see animal slaughter?

Searching for Common Ground

Medical Experimentation

Pets

Commercial Animal Agriculture

Wild Animals, Zoos, and Animal preservation

Medical Experimentation

Some animal experimentation is avoidable or redundant

Can animal suffering count, even if it doesn't count as much as human suffering?

Three R's:

- 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.
- Source: http://www.rds-online.org.uk/pages/page.asp?i_ToolbarID=4&i_PageID=45



In 1997 Dr Jay Vacanti and his team grew an ear on the back of a mouse

Commercial Animal Agriculture

Some methods of raising and slaughtering animals involve much more suffering for the animals than others.



Wild Animals, Zoos, and Animal Preservation



Should animals be held in captivity for humans to view?

- Promotes animal welfare programs

Should we try to preserve animal species that may otherwise die out?

Pets

In what ways, if any, should human beings have close attachments to animals?

