

The Philosophy of Animal
Rights

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Animal Rights Position: animals must have at least one basic, pre-legal moral right—the right not to be property.

Right: A way of protecting an interest.

Interests are protected against abrogation for consequential reasons.

Not absolute.

There is a great deal of controversy about which rights have.

But there is no dispute that every human should have the right not to be property.

This is the minimal level of protection required for membership in the moral community.

Individual characteristics do not matter. If sentient (subjectively aware), we reject use exclusively as a resource (chattel slave, forced organ donor, nonconsenting subject in biomedical experiment, etc.)

Limited protection: only stops use as a resource.

What about nonhuman animals? Most of those we routinely exploit are unquestionably sentient.

Is there a rational basis to deny according them this one right?

Usual ground: they lack some cognitive characteristic we have; they are cognitively inferior.

But that cannot be a justification. Putting aside empirical questions, whatever defect/absence of characteristic that we think animals have is shared by some group of humans.

E.g., Rationality and the ability to use
concepts

May be relevant for some purposes but not for resource use.

Similarly, to say that animals don't write symphonies or do calculus does not work.

We cannot justify not according animals this one right—except on species.

Requires the abolition of animal exploitation as a matter of justice.

Veganism: if animals have the right not to be used property, commodities, we cannot justify institutional exploitation.

Usual response: we don't have to have to go that far. There is an alternative: animal welfare theory: The idea that it's morally acceptable to use animals as long as we don't impose unnecessary suffering on them and treat them "humanely."

Two observations:

1. If we think about it, conventional wisdom—the animal welfare position—gets us to almost the same point. It requires necessity; compulsion.

“Necessity”

Not needed for health

Ecological disaster

Issues of human starvation

Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Vegetarian Diets.

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Abstract

It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits for the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes. Plant-based diets are more environmentally sustainable than diets rich in animal products because they use fewer natural resources and are associated with much less environmental damage. Vegetarians and vegans are at reduced risk of certain health conditions, including ischemic heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, certain types of cancer, and obesity. Low intake of saturated fat and high intakes of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, soy products, nuts, and seeds (all rich in fiber and phytochemicals) are characteristics of vegetarian and vegan diets that produce lower total and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels and better serum glucose control. These factors contribute to reduction of chronic disease. Vegans need reliable sources of vitamin B-12, such as fortified foods or supplements.

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Major study also finds huge changes to farming are needed to avoid destroying Earth's ability to feed its population

- **We label fridges to show their environmental impact - why not food?**



The only not transparently use:
vivisection.

So if we took the animal welfare idea seriously, we'd still abolish almost all animal use even without rights.

2. The animal welfare standard cannot work precisely because animals are property: requires a balance of interests of right holders against interest of animal property.

It costs money to protect animal interests and we generally do not spend that money unless there is an economic benefit.

What is “necessary” is not use but practices/procedures needed to accomplish unnecessary uses.

Result: standard of animal welfare is linked to efficient exploitation.

If all animal welfare theory requires is efficient exploitation, animals still remain as things.

Please consider going vegan.