

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON ANIMAL RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper will address the issue of animal rights from the perspective of six different disciplines, including biology, ethics, history, law, physiological psychology and religion. Each of these disciplines' attempts to address questions relating to animal rights will be presented. Then, using an interdisciplinary approach, the information will be integrated in an attempt to generate new answers to questions about animal rights.

INTRODUCTION

Just as there are millions of animals on our planet, there are millions of views and opinions regarding animal rights. Ask a doctor his feelings regarding this subject and you may get a different answer than if you asked a priest or a lawyer. Ask someone living in America their views on animal rights and you may get a different answer than if you asked someone living in India. Animal rights are a debate that is steeped in controversy because it touches every aspect of society. The implications go beyond most imaginations.

Today animals are afforded certain protections under the law. These protections include food, water and a safe environment in which to live free from undue pain and suffering. Many would like to see these animal protections taken further by giving animals their own rights, rights that may include the ability to sue in a court of law, or the right to not undergo medical procedures for animal experimentation. Giving animals rights is controversial because it would require society to stop using and treating animals in certain ways. Animals would no longer be subject to what some view as inhumane treatment. There would be restrictions on treatment and use of them for food, clothing and entertainment purposes.

This paper will discuss the differing viewpoints on animal rights. Should animals have rights? Can they possess them? What might some of the implications be if animals are given rights? How society answers these questions and a host of others that will arise will have a great impact on our relationship with our non-human friends for years to come.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Ethical: An academic system of values that makes claims about right and wrong. Ethical theory usually delivers a method for determining rightness or wrongness, a model for determining rightness or wrongness of actions.

Moral: Having to do with persons and their actions. Morals are judgments about goodness or badness of a human action. Morals are the principles by which one lives. Morals are people's values, how one actually lives. Morals may be derived from ethics.

Humane: Marked or motivated by concern with the alleviation of suffering.

Rights: Something that is due to a person or governmental body by law, tradition, or nature. Something, especially humane treatment, claimed to be due to animals by moral principle.

VIEWPOINTS FROM HISTORY

History is the study of the past. It is the story and recordings of humanity (answers.com). Through the use of books, newspapers, documents, personal papers, records, historical artifacts and oral interviews, historians piece together past events to determine why and how things happened (answers.com). Everything that exists today, including attitudes, social norms, morals and values, has a link to the past. That link to the past may account for humankind's feelings on animal rights.

The relationship between human and non-human animals is a long and varied story dating back to pre-historic times. Throughout history humankind and animal have been both predator and prey. Humans learned early on how to use animals to their advantage for food, clothing, shelter and currency. The alliance between humans and non-human animals during these times has led to the dual relationship, both companion and agricultural, that modern society now shares with animals. It is important to discuss the bond between humans and animals and to give some background on this relationship. Understanding this bond may provide answers to the questions regarding animal rights.

Animals have always had an important relationship with humans. Dating back about 10,000 years, when Homo sapiens transitioned from being hunter-gathers into more permanent communities, animals were domesticated for food and clothing (Ho). It is here that the modern affiliation with animals began. Early societies came to depend upon animals not only for food and clothing, but also as a source of companionship. Some animals such as the oxen were used for labor; other smaller animals such as the dog became companions. In these pre-historic times the hierarchy between humans and animals did not exist. Both lived side by side in close proximity because humans felt they were closely related to the animals (Ho). It was not until the Middle Ages that humankind's view of animals began to change.

During the Middle Ages, the church tried to separate humans and animals by pointing out the many differences between the species. This view did not last long, and in the 12th century the Greeks and Romans began to break down some of the boundaries established in earlier days (Ho). Although Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle, and Greek philosophies, such as the Stoic philosophy, did not believe that animals were rational enough to warrant moral consideration, other philosophies and philosophers in Greece did believe in the moral consideration of animals (Huss). One such philosophy was Pythagoreanism, which believed in the human-animal bond and held that animals did possess souls (Huss). Advocates of this philosophy, along with Greek

philosophers such as Plato, did not believe in animal cruelty and kept vegetarian diets (Huss). These Greek views formed the foundation for animal rights.

As humans became capable of traveling over long distances, fascination with the animal world did not diminish. As the world was explored over land and sea, humans documented and collected different specimens of plants, insects, and animals for study and research (Ho). This documentation led to the Taxonomic Classification System being developed in the 1700s by a Swedish botanist named Linnaeus (Ho). This classification system names and gives relationships for every plant and animal species known to humankind (Ho). This classification system is so important that it is still used today by scientists. As this review suggests, no relationship has been stronger or lasted longer than the human-animal relationship.

Just as there has been a long history in the relationship between humans and non-human animals, there has been an equally long history of discrimination, oppression and speciesism toward our non-human friends. This history of discrimination and oppression has its own roots embedded deep within the human psyche. This acknowledgement by no means makes discrimination and oppression acceptable, but it may help to shed some light on why some humans treat animals as they do.

One reason for the savage treatment of animals is tradition. Tradition allows us to leave things as status quo because “things have always, been this way (Berry).” Tradition leads us to believe that if things have always been this way, then they must be good and serve an important function (Berry). This is not always the case. Sometimes, what was thought to be good and valuable in the past has no place in present thinking. For example, owning slaves was considered a tradition in the American south in the 1700 and 1800’s, but it was deemed oppressive and discriminatory in the 1860’s and the practice was outlawed.

Another reason for the harsh treatment of animals is the capitalistic nature of humans. Most industries rely on animal exploitation or oppression to better themselves and the bottom line. Animals, by themselves, are powerless to stop the exploitation of their habitats and their bodies. Governments are so concerned with their constituents and winning elections that animal rights get lost in the shuffle. Until recently, most animal issues in the corporate world were pushed to the side and not given consideration. Within the last 30 years many “social and ethical revolutions (Rollin)” have taken place. Among them is the concern for animal rights and well-being.

The reasons for change are many. One reason is that our society has become concerned for the rights and well-being of oppressed and disadvantaged groups, including minorities, the handicapped and women (Rollins). Another reason for change involves views of animals as members of the family and not merely sources for food or labor (Rollins). With such changes taking place in society’s view of animals, it would stand to reason that the corporate world would have to make changes in the way it behaves.

Today, success in the business world is tied to social ethics. Freedom and autonomy are tied to these ethics as well (Rollin), because they allow a company to pursue its goals without government and societal intervention. Business is allowed to regulate itself so long as it does not

cross an ethical line that would draw attention to the fact it is doing something deemed unethical. In the last three decades the emphasis on the ethical treatment of animals used by society has taken center stage. Concerns ranging from guidelines for animal research to saving marine mammals to preventing ivory importation have risen to forefront (Rollin). These concerns have pushed many legislative bills through Congress and European societies, curtailing the unethical and oppressive behavior of business. For example, in 1988 the Swedish Parliament passed new laws regulating confinement systems for farm animals and in 2001 the European Union followed suit (Rollins). These laws allow animals to live a more humane existence while still providing food for humans to live.

Another reason humans treat their non-human counterparts so inhumanely is because we see animals as “things” or property rather than as living, breathing, thinking, feeling creatures that deserve our compassion and empathy. It is easy to treat a “thing” or piece of property poorly; it is not so easy to treat something with a name and a face inhumanely.

Throughout history, many theories have been advanced to explain why humans treat animals as they do. One of these theories is contractualism. Contractualists view animals only as a means to an end; this end is the benefit of humankind (Huss). Contractualists, such as Immanuel Kant, feel that moral duties are only owed to rational beings (Huss), those who understand justice and participate in reciprocity (Huss). Reciprocity is a social contract in which rights or privileges are exchanged. Animals do not possess the skills necessary to participate in reciprocity, therefore they do not warrant moral consideration.

Other theories to explain behavior toward non-human animals are speciesism and the Similarity Principle. Speciesism, like racism, holds that one species is superior to another based on certain characteristics of the more powerful species. In this case, humans are more superior to animals due to our ability to feel pain and reason morally. The Similarity Principle states that people give more consideration to others who are perceived as similar to themselves than to those who are perceived as dissimilar (Plous). This principle holds true with regard to animals. Studies have shown that humans are more likely to help endangered species if they can relate biologically to them (Plous). This information does not come as a surprise; throughout history people have reacted positively to their own kind and negatively to those different from themselves.

Lastly, the legal status of animals plays an important role in the human view of animals. The law views animals as legal property, and under the law humans are allowed to exploit non-humans for their own purposes. To view animals as anything more than property humans would have to afford animals interests and come to the realization that animals can feel pain (Bartlett). These are difficult concepts for many to comprehend. It is difficult for some to conceive of affording rights to property. It is a person’s legal and moral right to own and control property (Huss). Many will not give this right up easily. The idea of affording animals personhood status has come to the forefront in animal rights debates. Awarding personhood to animals would essentially be the same as awarding custody of a child to an adult (Huss); for example, the animal would have legal rights in court just as a child does. Personhood status will be discussed fully in another section of this paper. The reasons why humans do not treat animals well are varied, with many of those reasons being deeply ingrained through decades or centuries of thought.

So, what can society do to change the attitudes of humans toward their non-human counterparts? Following the lead of business in changing their practices and views regarding animals, professional fields such as sociology and psychology must help to change the longstanding views and attitudes that many in society hold of animals. “Appreciation and respect for the inherent dignity and worth of all persons (Wolf)” must be brought to light. Sociologists and psychologists must become more aware and involved in environmental issues (Wolf). There have been many studies that show that our behavior toward animals is an extension of how we behave toward each other; the poor treatment of animals can be linked to anti-social behavior in humans (Wolf). Encouraging more nurturing behavior toward animals may even lead to a more nurturing environment for humans.

The practice of speciesism must also be overcome. It is irrational thinking to believe that a member of another species does not deserve the same considerations as a human because they are different or possess other intelligence. Animals exist for themselves and their own purposes. The narcissistic lack of empathy that humans show toward non-human animals is immoral (Bartlett). Animal rights are a social and moral issue, one that will not be fully addressed until the independence, integrity, and the reality of the life-worlds of other species are accepted (Bartlett). Animals are not ends to human means; they are ends in themselves (Bartlett). It is up to humankind to ensure that their interests are preserved.

VIEWPOINTS FROM MEDICAL ETHICS

Medical ethics, as defined by Wikipedia.org, is the discipline of evaluating the merits, risks and social concerns of activities in the medical field. Medical ethics provide suggestions and principles that doctors and other healthcare professionals should take into consideration while treating patients. These principles include the Hippocratic Oath of do no harm; the patient’s right to dignity, truthfulness and honesty; acting in the best interest of the patient; justice with regard to treatment and the patient’s right to choose or refuse treatment (Wikipedia). These principles do not provide answers to doctors and healthcare professionals with regard to actual cases; they act as a guide in decision-making. Many doctors, scientists and healthcare professionals look to medical ethics for guidance in making life and death decisions. Medical ethics also extends itself to animals and animal rights. Acting in the best interests of animals is important since they have provided and continue to provide science with potential life saving technology and knowledge.

The creation and use of technology will undoubtedly be one of the greatest legacies of humankind. From the creation of fire, to the wheel, electricity and computers, humankind’s thirst for knowledge and creation is unquenchable. The field of medicine is no exception. Here, humanity is committed to unlocking the doors of the human condition, eradicating disease and improving the quality of life for future generations. The research needed to accomplish these tasks, in most cases, involves a heavy price. This price is millions of animal lives. Animals are involved in medical experimentations of varying sorts and degrees, all to help further the cause of human life and well-being.

The use of animals in science has its beginnings in ancient Rome and Greece (Ho). Here vivisections were first performed by cutting the throat of a drinking pig to study the act of swallowing (Ho). It was believed that vivisection was the only way to obtain knowledge of

actual bodily functions and practice surgical skills (Ho). It is through these early procedures that knowledge has advanced so rapidly in the field of disease and medicine. The practice of vivisection plays an important role in medical advancements, though it does not come without controversy. It is argued that this research procedure is unethical and inhumane treatment toward animals. Many back in the 18th and 19th century, as well as today, share these thoughts. At the same time, it can also be argued that much of what we know today about medicine would not exist without vivisection.

Studying animals is a way to understand life processes (Ho). Those involved in the controversy surrounding medical experimentation want to better medical science but not at a cost to the animals. What rights do animals have in medical experimentation? What will be the cost, in medical advancements and human rights, if animals are given more rights?

At any one time there are numerous types of medical experiments taking place around the world. The United States is not the only country involved in research of disease. Currently, there is much talk about cloning, genetic engineering and xenotransplantation. These medical breakthroughs have garnered much attention due to their highly controversial nature. All three of these medical practices have the ability to take medicine and the eradication of disease into places never thought possible with early medicine. The catch is that they require animals as their test subjects.

In 1995 two scientists at the Roslin Institute in Scotland cloned two lambs (Autumn). One year later the same scientists cloned Dolly, the now famous sheep (Autumn). Since then, scientists all over the world have cloned a variety of animals. A majority of people view animal cloning as morally wrong, yet there is no call for tighter government regulation and control (Autumn). Why is this? Perhaps society is unsure how it feels about animal rights and is ill prepared to make a decision about animal cloning.

Much of animal cloning is aimed at helping humans. For example, the treatment of disease, better food production and entertainment all serve as human purposes for cloning (Autumn). Some cloning projects are aimed at helping animals, like cloning endangered and extinct species (Autumn). Cloning brings up many moral and ethical concerns for both humans and animals. One moral concern raised by the cloning process is are humans playing G-d? Other moral questions surround the pain and suffering of the animals involved in the cloning process. Many would argue that the pain and suffering of the animals make this process unethical; others say that if the cost to research animals is small enough and the gain for humans and animals is large enough, animal cloning is worth it (Autumn). Perhaps, with a more definitive conclusion regarding what is considered ethical, unethical, humane and inhumane, our views on cloning would be clearer.

According to Michael J. Reiss and Roger Straughan, genetic engineering garners much attention due to the controversial nature of its “direct, intentional, alteration of the genetic material of organisms” (qtd in Melin). Genetic engineering involves removing genetic material from one species and transferring that genetic material into another species (Melin). Then, the added genetic material is passed down from one generation of plant or animal to another. Species that contain genetic material from another species are called “transgenic species” (Melin). The

process of genetic engineering has been used for many years with flowers, vegetables and animals. Genetic engineering in animals has been used to create animals with specific characteristics that humans desire (Melin). This process has been used both in the laboratory and on farms.

Many view this form of medical research as unethical. Environmental ethicist Holmes Rolston, III, says that, “species are evolutionary lines with identity in time as well as space” (qtd in Melin). Who is humankind to alter those evolutionary lines of species that have been on earth for centuries? Rolston goes on to say that, “both individual living beings and species have integrity that we ought to respect” (qtd in Melin). How can those lines be respected if they are being altered? So the question becomes, does humanity see genetic engineering as altering evolutionary lines, or does humanity see genetic engineering as a way to eradicate disease and provide more food to hungry nations?

Ethicist Bernard E. Rollin sees things differently. He believes in a “principle of conservation of welfare” for animals (qtd in Melin). This principle states that our moral obligation towards animals is to minimize their suffering. “Any animals that are genetically engineered for human use or even environmental benefit should be no worse off, in terms of suffering, after the new traits are introduced into the genome than the parent stock was prior to the insertion of the new genetic material” (qtd in Melin). This reasoning would make genetic engineering a viable and moral option for scientists trying to eradicate disease, or farmers trying to grow more productive crops. Genetic engineering should be a consideration, so long as it is not detrimental to the plant or animal being altered. But, what about the “thing” being altered: Should we not give the plants and animals consideration?

If species are seen as individuals rather than as things, as other environmental ethicists claim, then we should extend the same consideration to those species as we would to the human species (Melin). For all species help to form humanity. All species have “morally relevant interests” (Melin), and it is up to humans to ensure that the interests of all species are looked after and preserved for future generations.

Xenotransplantation is the science of transplanting organs from other species into humans to replace their organs. Forms of xenotransplantation have been tried for centuries. In the 17th century, blood transfusions were tried using animal blood, and in the 19th century skin grafts were attempted using skin from dogs, cats, rabbits, and frogs (Mani and Mathew). The transplantation of kidneys, livers and hearts was attempted into humans back in 1905 with unsuccessful results (Mani and Mathew). These unsuccessful attempts have not stopped humans from trying to devise new ways to transplant organs, and in the 21st century xenotransplantation is being brought to the forefront of medical science once again.

Xenotransplantation is an amazing science in that it could save thousands of human lives each year. People who wait and die on organ transplant lists could be saved by the organ donation of an animal. This type of science does not come without reservation. Xenotransplantation has many ethical, moral and safety risks that must be considered, not only for the human recipients of the organs, but also for the animal organ donors. For all the potential benefits to humanity that xenotransplantation holds, the risks must be assessed.

The risks involved with xenotransplantation are many and varied. They range from rejection of the donor organ to animal viruses that may infect the human recipient. Ethical concerns are raised, ranging from the suffering and exploitation of the donor animals to using apes and genetically modified animals specifically bred for this type of surgery. Legal issues also take precedence. There are issues of consent, both patient and global. Who is to say how many issues may arise if this type of medical procedure were to become mainstream?

What of the animals? What of animal rights? There are many things to consider. One is the untold pain and suffering of the donor animals. Many argue that a minimal amount of suffering on the part of animals is acceptable if it will benefit humans in the long run (Mani and Mathew). But, what is minimal suffering? How do we determine what that amount is? It varies in humans; would it not vary in animals? Primates would be considered the best chance for xenotransplantation since humans share much of their genetic make-up (Mani and Mathew). With their advanced social and intellectual skills, such as self-awareness and complex social relationships (Mani and Mathew), these animals would suffer immensely, too much for most people to consider moral. Pigs, on the other hand, do not share as many human capabilities (Mani and Mathew). The potential for their suffering is thought to be less than for primates.

What of humanness? What are the effects on the organ donor animals created specifically for xenotransplantation with some human genetic material inside them (Bach, Iverson, and Weeramantry)? Are these animals then not considered part human and owed legal human rights? Governments would have to think very long and hard about the social and ethical repercussions of an animal that contains human DNA. When one produces a hybrid like human/animal what principles govern such an entity (Bach, Iverson, and Weeramantry)? These ethical questions cannot wait to be answered; they must be answered before the process begins.

With such controversial medical procedures taking place and animal rights and welfare issues being in the spotlight, many may be under the impression that science does not take into consideration the animals and their well-being. This may be an easy assumption to make given the media attention animal experimentation receives. Many may have thoughts of Dr. Frankenstein in his laboratory with cages upon cages of animals at his disposal. This is not the case. Scientists have guidelines, both governmental and ethical, that they follow when performing experiments using animals. Scientists are aware that all species are in a struggle for existence, but would it not be remiss of science and humanity to not try to rid the world of disease (Morrison)? The respect for life is a creed scientists live by, and we have all benefited in some way from their research.

Scientists feel a great obligation to animals under their control (Morrison). It is the "scientist's competence and knowledge that determine whether the animal's participation is for a noble cause" (Morrison). This may not always be easy to determine, but scientists do the best they can in making those decisions. While under the care of the scientist the animal does have certain rights. Those rights are to food, water and humane treatment (Morrison). These animal rights are provided by law. Scientists must also submit research proposals that must be reviewed and approved by a committee before any experimentation can take place (Morrison). The purpose of the proposal process is to ensure that the research is methodically sound and that the animals' welfare is secure (Morrison). Daily oversight of an institution's animals also aids in ensuring

quality of experiments and quality of life for the animals (Morrison). Although many would like to end animal experimentation, laws and science do all they can to ensure that animals are treated humanely while under the scientist's care.

It has been argued that medical experimentation is unethical, that animals should not be used to further the cause of human medicine. It has also been argued that without animal experimentation, human medicine would not be where it is today, on the cutting edge of new life-saving technologies. Procedures such as cloning, genetic engineering and xenotransplantation, that hold hope for so many suffering from disease and illness may be highly controversial, but to think that future generations may not be inflicted with the disease and illnesses of today is remarkable.

No one likes to think of animals suffering to better the human cause. Many feel that animals are creatures unto themselves and should not be exploited by humans for their own selfish purposes. One needs to consider that advancements in human medicine also make for advancements in veterinary medicine, none of which would be possible without medical experimentation. Although there are many questions to be answered about many medical procedures, is society at large willing to stop medical advancements altogether by eliminating animal experimentation?

VIEWPOINTS FROM RELIGION

Religion, as defined by the Columbia University Press, is a system of thought, feeling, and action that is shared by a group and that gives the members an object of devotion, a code of behavior by which individuals may judge the personal and social consequences of their actions, and a frame of reference by which individuals may relate to their group and their universe. Religion is important in defining our beliefs and has a role in shaping the views and opinions of people and society. Religion includes two branches of study. The first branch is theology, which studies religion from the perspective of a particular community of believers; the second branch is religious studies which utilizes tools from other academic fields such as philosophy, history, sociology and anthropology to study the nature of religion and religious traditions (studyreligion.org). Through the study of religion answers to questions regarding life and the world we live in, including questions regarding animal rights may be found.

From the beginning of time, with Adam and Eve, religion has molded our beliefs. Religious leaders, philosophers, and theologians have played a significant role in shaping human views by reiterating the concepts of religious works and spreading the message that is to be shared with the masses. Many of society's ethical and moral ideals are based in religion. Wars have been waged over differing religious views, and debates over ethical concerns, such as abortion and homosexuality, have been played out in houses of worship for decades. It should come as no surprise to learn that religious views have also shaped our perception of animals and animal rights.

Religions have different views on animals, their rights and well-being. How religious leaders and philosophers interpret these views has and can have an important impact on animal rights. Differing views on evolution by the church and state have caused many school districts strife in trying to teach about origins. The same holds true for animal rights. Views expressed in the Bible

are seen by some as law that should be followed accordingly. Where does this leave the animals and animal rights? According to religious teachings, can animals possess rights?

Eastern religions hold all living creatures in high regard. In the Buddhist religion, all animals (as well as humans) have an opportunity to reach enlightenment (Huss). Hinduism teaches the unity of all creation (Huss). Followers of Islam are taught in the Koran “the bond between man and nature is inseparable” (qtd in Huss). In contrast, Judeo-Christian views hold that humans are to have dominion over animals (Huss). With so many differing views, animal rights mean different things to different people. To focus the discussion, this section will focus on the Judeo-Christian view of animals, and how Judeo-Christian teachings have shaped many opinions with regard to animals and their rights.

Over the years, in religious circles, there has been much discussion regarding the status of animals. Early philosophers such as Aristotle stated, “nature has made all the animals for the sake of man” (qtd in Harrison). Other positions, dating back to 17th Century England, held that animals were placed on Earth to be at the disposal of humans (Harrison). The holy fathers practiced this, books were written about it, and the Bible stated it. Genesis states that, “G-d gave man dominion over the animals” (qtd in Levy). This view was then carried further by other philosophers of the time who said that humankind owes no moral duties to animals because they possess inferior, irrational souls (Harrison). It was these early views that helped shape humankind’s opinion about the role of animals and their rights.

Descartes believed that animals were only biological machines, incapable of any sort of conscious state, including the feeling of pain (Levy). Writer Sir Kenelm Digby agreed with Descartes and stated that the “intelligent behavior of animals was a credit not to the ingenuity of the creature, but to the creator” (qtd in Harrison). Animals were instruments performing without reason, just as a clock (Harrison). These 17th Century views were difficult to change.

In the 1800’s Charles Darwin set the religious world alight with his book *The Origin of Species*, which discussed his theory on evolution. While many in the religious community believed that G-d created each being independently, Darwin believed that all creatures evolved from a few, giving us a common descent and ancestry (Maurer). Darwin believed in the laws of the struggle for life and natural selection (Maurer). He felt humans “acquired a dignity when they are viewed as descendants of a few primitive beings rather than independently created” (Harrison). This view tied in with his notion of evolution. It also gives support for the belief that humankind is not superior to animals, if we all originated from the same place.

There are many in the religious community and elsewhere that believe a literal interpretation of the Bible and the Book of Genesis is too extreme and taken out of context. According to Professor Emeritus Ze’ev Levy, the Bible and the Talmud say that, “man was destined to be master over all animals; they were designed to serve man”, but these same teachings also imply that “mastery means taking care of those who are dependent on you, and to defend the rights of the weak and vulnerable” (Levy). In other words, we should not treat animals without regard; we should have compassion in our attitudes and treatment towards them. Levy goes on to say that there are many instances in the Bible where humans are told how to carry out their behavior toward animals. For example, in the Book of Exodus it states that on the Sabbath everybody of

the household shall rest, including the animals (Levy). Passages like this lead one to believe that G-d does think of the animals and their well-being.

Jesuit biblical scholar Robert Murray believes that human beings made in the image of G-d were not made with the ideals of tyranny, manipulation or exploitation, rather human beings were made with the ideals of justice, mercy and concern for all living creatures (qtd in Zuzworsky). Humans should act as G-d acted, which means showing concern for all creatures and living peaceably together (Zuzworsky). This is how G-d would want our relationship with animals to be. St Francis of Assisi is another example that may illustrate what G-d had in mind regarding the relationship between humans and animals. Francis believed that all creatures, human and non-human, were created to give glory to G-d (Zuzworsky). It does not matter if that creature walks on two legs or four, has feathers or fur: All creatures are loved by G-d. John Paul II named Francis the patron saint of ecology because of his love for all creatures regardless of their worth and usefulness in the eyes of humankind (Zuzworsky).

Religion continually shapes the thought processes of society and helps to define our ethics and morals. It is difficult to argue an ethically charged debate if proof lies within the Bible and our religious scholars defend those teachings whole-heartedly. It is over time and reflection on such writings and teachings that new and different views may come into focus. These views may differ from what has always been taught, but perhaps it is time to take a look at the different perspectives and realize change in behavior and attitude could, as with the case of animal rights, be beneficial to society.

There is a reason that humans and animals reside together on our planet. It could be that G-d created the species; it may be because of evolution as Darwin's Theory suggests, or possibly the answer lies in a process we have yet to conceive. What is known is that an individual's belief system may determine just how valuable animal rights are to society and those ideals may shape the views of future generations.

VIEWPOINTS FROM LAW

Law has governed people's actions for centuries. It is a formal regime that orders or regulates human activities and relations (answers.com) Laws are a way to ensure specific treatment of people in society. Laws may require certain actions and give people the power to engage in certain activities (answers.com). These activities may include entering into legal contracts or airing disputes. Laws arise from the values of a society and help to guide that society toward what is deemed moral and ethical behavior. If laws are broken, punishment may ensue. There are many types of law: corporate, criminal, maritime and international, to name a few. Each type of law upholds and defends specific entities or people. For example, animal law upholds and defends the rights of animals in domestic, agricultural and medical settings. Animal law has been receiving much attention lately due to the standing that animals now hold in society. Many view animals not just as property, but also as members of their families, and with this status laws have had to be changed and enacted to ensure animal protection and safety.

Animal law is not a new concept. In 1641, the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony printed in their legal code statutes protecting animals (Ho). After the Revolutionary War, anti-cruelty

laws were passed in New York protecting cattle and sheep (Ho). In the late nineteenth century, British and American Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals were formed, and after WWII the Humane Society of the United States was formed to protect animals and educate society about animal welfare (Lubinski). In 1966 the Animal Welfare Act was enacted to protect laboratory animals used in research (Ho). This act has been updated many times and now includes animals used in zoos, circuses, aquarium exhibits and education (Ho).

Laws protecting animals and their well-being have done much to protect them but there was a time when animals were put on trial for their crimes just as humans would be. Throughout much of the middle ages and up until the twentieth century, animals were put on trial in many European countries (Dinzelbacher). Although these trials only happened under the most extreme circumstances, they nonetheless took place. These trials were carried out by professional lawyers and carried harsh sentences for the accused (Dinzelbacher). Domestic animals who had wounded or killed a human would be publicly put to death, to serve as an example to other animals, that this type of behavior would not be tolerated in the community (Dinzelbacher). Justice for the crime had to be served, and this punishment was believed to be morally acceptable.

Today, animals are no longer brought to trial but the controversy surrounding animal rights still exists. There are many definitions for the word “rights”. A right can be either legal or philosophical, which means that its definition will vary depending on the context that it is used. Legal rights are those that the government provides for and protects; these rights cannot be taken away by a court or government (Lubinski). Philosophical rights are recognized as “inherent to human civilization; those that are based on notions of morality (Lubinski).” Therefore, legal rights are enforced by law and recognized by the court system, where philosophical rights are enforced by the moral behavior of society. Today, only humans are allowed legal rights.

Under current law, animals are looked upon as personal property (Huss). There are laws that protect animals from cruelty and torture, but animals are seen as possessions of humans. Animals fitting the description of companion animal have more rights than wild animals, but companion animals are still seen as personal property under the law (Huss). This means that animals belong to their human owners but those same owners cannot “intentionally engage in acts of cruelty or neglect against them” (Sunstein). The question becomes, do current animal laws go far enough in protecting animals or does more need to be done to protect their interests?

Recently there has been controversy surrounding the idea of granting animals’ legal personhood. Legal personhood allows certain non-persons legal rights and protections under the law (Lubinski). Having legal personhood standing is important because it allows one to sue, to address wrongs that have been committed against them (Lubinski). Animals are not considered legal persons under the law; therefore, they cannot sue for injustices brought against them. However, animals do not know that they are considered property and possess no rights.

If animals were given personhood status under the law, many of society’s views and laws on the nature and treatment of animals would have to change. The economic atmosphere would change as well. In the past anti-cruelty animal laws have punished the owner of the animal for neglect or abuse; with personhood status, an animal would be able to sue for damages, distress, pain and suffering brought on by the cruelty or neglect (Favre). Owners would become guardians of their

animals and as guardians could not act in their own best interest but would have to act in the best interest of the animal (Favre). If that interest could not be decided upon than it would be left up to a court of law to decide (Favre). Animals would have legal rights that extend far beyond the reach of existing anti-cruelty laws.

The economy would be affected by personhood status as well. Animals are big business in our society. Aside from food and clothing, many of our everyday household products are made from animals. Changing the current animal laws would have a great impact on the national economy (Lubinski). Many forms of entertainment, recreation and industry rely on animals and their by-products to survive (Lubinski). If current law were to be changed, many industries would suffer as a result. Industries that use animals, such as cows, to make numerous products, like soap and detergents, would no longer be allowed to use their fat as an ingredient in their products. The hunting and fishing industry would suffer as a result of laws that make it illegal to hunt and fish for sport. Farmers, circuses and zoos would also suffer as a result of personhood laws.

The question of which animals would be given personhood rights becomes an issue as well. Most people agree that companion and agricultural animals should be protected under law, but what about lesser animals such as rodents, ants, and flying insects (Sunstein)? Should animals that have the ability to feel pain and suffer be the only animals protected under law and considered for personhood status? Should animal rights be determined by the cognitive abilities of the animal or should all animals regardless of mental capacity be afforded protection? In many countries around the world these questions are being addressed with new laws and statutes aimed directly at animals and their rights.

European countries have been more willing than the United States to embrace animal law. Many years ago New Zealand enacted the Great Ape Project that gives basic fundamental rights to apes (Lubinski). The law provides three guarantees to these animals: the right not to be deprived of life, not to suffer cruel treatment and not to be subjected to medical or scientific experimentation (Lubinski). The European Union has signed a pet protection treaty which states that animals shall not be abandoned and animals shall not be caused unnecessary pain and suffering (Lubinski). The country of India, which teaches respect and protection of all animal life, specifically states in its constitution many laws that protect animals (Lubinski). Many in society view these laws as a change of attitude toward animals and their welfare. Many also feel much more can be done.

There is much controversy with regard to animal rights. Some feel the legal status of animals should remain what it is today but harsher treatments and penalties should be enacted for those who injure or abuse an animal (Lubinski). Many feel that animals should be granted more rights including those of personhood so they have a legal right to protection and recognition under the law (Lubinski). Then there are those who feel that animal rights should remain what they are today with the hope that more animal rights will be forthcoming in the future (Lubinski). Regardless of which point of view one subscribes to, controversy is sure to follow. A debate on animal rights is not something that many in society want to engage in, for there are far reaching consequences on all sides. Nevertheless, it would appear the time is drawing near for some discussion due to the fact that many see animals not merely as “things” but as an intricate part of society.

VIEWPOINTS FROM BIOLOGY

Biology is the science of life (answers.com.). This discipline concerns itself with the “characteristics and behaviors of organisms, how species and individuals come into existence, and the interactions they have with each other and their environment” (answers.com). By looking at basic structures of living systems, the operation of these structures, the histories of organisms and the interactions of those organisms, biology proposes theories on life and life processes (answers.com). Through biology, similarities and differences between humans and non-humans can be found.

Human beings are part of the animal kingdom. In fact, we are at the top of the animal world hierarchy. Although there are different theories on evolution, those in the scientific field speculate that all living beings originated from single cells millions of years ago. As those cells became more diverse, more complex species of animals came into existence. As early animals died off and became extinct, animals closely related to the previous genus evolved. It is through this evolution process, over millions of years that human and non-human animals have arrived at present day with the genetic make-up we carry. It is also this genetic make-up that separates humans from animals, or does it?

It is scientific fact that humans and monkeys share 99 percent of the same DNA. Pig organs are similar in size and shape to that of humans, and pigs are very intelligent social animals. The genome project has shown that humans share many of the same genes with mice (Grandin). As scientific research breaks down the walls of human and animal genes we may find we are more similar to our non-human counterparts than we may want to believe. If we are so similar, shouldn't animals have the same rights as humans?

VIEWPOINTS FROM PHYSIOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Another similarity that humans may share with animals is their ability to feel pain and suffer. The discipline of physiological psychology looks at this phenomena. Physiological psychology attempts to understand the correlation between the mind, behavior and bodily mechanisms (answers.com). By studying disciplines of molecular genetics to social behavior, physiological psychology attempts to unlock the mysteries of anxiety, depression, aggressive behavior and sensory processes. Physiological psychology not only describes that a behavior occurred but describes the physiological processes that occurred as well (Origins). We know that humans feel pain and suffer; the argument lies with regard to animals and their ability to feel pain and suffer. It is with this argument that answers to many of the questions regarding animal rights may lie. If an animal does not have the ability or mental capacities to feel pain and suffer, should it be given consideration with regard to animal rights?

To obtain answers to the questions of animal pain and suffering, definitions of both must be understood. Most people associate suffering with pain. These two conditions are uniquely different from one another, and one does not require the other to be present or felt. Pain, as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is an unpleasant sensation occurring in varying degrees of severity as a consequence of injury, disease, or emotional disorder. Suffering, as

defined by Marian Stamp Dawkins, a tutor in biological sciences at Oxford University is the experience of one of a wide range of extremely unpleasant subjective (mental) states. This subjective experience has two distinguishing characteristics; the first is that the experience is unpleasant (Dawkins), and the second is that the experience carries connotations of being extreme (Dawkins). In other words, being thirsty may be unpleasant, but constantly being punched in the rib cage (unpleasant and extreme) would lead to suffering.

This brings us to the question of can animals suffer? We know that animals can feel pain. Most any animal with the exception of fish, amphibians and some reptiles will experience pain (Grandin and Deesing). However, knowing that an animal is in pain may not be obvious from observing the animal. Animals in the wild have had to protect themselves from predators; by showing pain they alert those predators to their condition and make themselves vulnerable to attack and death. In this sense animals may continue to behave “normally” although they are in pain. With pain does not necessarily come suffering. Although an animal may be injured, those injuries may not be causing the animal to suffer.

Assessing suffering in animals is not an easy task. Animals cannot speak to us and tell us how they are feeling. Most of our evidence of suffering comes from observations of the animal. Dawkins argues that there are three criteria that need to be assessed in determining whether an animal is suffering. The three criteria are physical health, physiological signs and behavior of the animal (Dawkins). The first sign an animal may be suffering is its physical health. Is the animal free of disease and injury? If so, what is the mental state of the animal? “Damage to the body does not always go with the highly unpleasant experience we call suffering from pain (Dawkins).” Sometimes an animal may be physically healthy but may be unhealthy mentally.

The second criterion Dawkins speaks of is physiological signs. Here it is important to distinguish between suffering and responses to stress. Stress is a physiological change that takes place whenever the animal is subjected to a wide range of conditions and situations (Dawkins). These stressors may include over crowding at a factory farm or flight from a predator. Stress can be reflected in a change in heart rate or rise of a particular hormone in the bloodstream (Dawkins). However, we would not want to assume that every time these physiological changes occur the animal is suffering. The animal may simply be reacting to a change in its environment.

The third criterion Dawkins refers to is behavior. Behavior in animals can be studied without disturbing the animals in their natural environment. Through behavior we may be able to glean something about their mental states. “The problem is to crack the code and to work out which behavior an animal uses to signal which emotional state (Dawkins)”. An animal may appear to be suffering when in fact it is expressing some other state such as stress, fear, or frustration.

Professor Bob Bermond of the University of Amsterdam argues that animals can “experience pain only as a reflex.” “They cannot experience pain consciously in the form of suffering, because to experience suffering you need the presence of the prefrontal cortex as well as the capacity to reflect (Bermond).” Since most animals (possibly apes and dolphins excluded) lack a developed prefrontal cortex it is not possible for them to suffer (Bermond). Suffering, Professor Bermond states, is “the experience of pain and of negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, sorrow

and guilt (Bermond). He goes on to state that in order for an animal to suffer the animal must possess consciousness, which they do not. Therefore, animals cannot suffer.

In contrast, Dr. Temple Grandin, Associate Professor at Colorado State University argues that “animals do not understand that they themselves may be property of a human being,” but that they do deserve protection from society (Grandin). The degree of that protection may lie with the complexity of the animal’s nervous system; it is this complexity that may allow an animal to suffer (Grandin). Her research indicates that an animal will suffer if it has sufficient circuits that merge with structures involved with emotion (Grandin). This research would indicate that many animals, especially mammals of higher intelligence, do have the ability to suffer.

There are many arguments with regard to animal pain and suffering. Much research still needs to be done to determine to what extent animals can or do feel pain and suffer. Many questions may arise if it is determined that higher mammals do in fact suffer, but lower animals do not. Should only those animals then be afforded rights, or should all animals by virtue of being a living, breathing being be given rights? Where does one draw the line between cats and dogs, dolphins and whales, apes and pigs? Who decides what is an acceptable amount of suffering to be considered for rights, and how is this decided? If the ability to suffer were to be the only factor used in the consideration of animals and their rights, it is quite possible that most of the animal kingdom would not make the cut.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of one’s personal views on animals, there is no denying that they touch our lives each and everyday. Whether it is the companion animal curled up on the couch, the leather shoes on our feet, the steak we had for dinner or the lifesaving procedure performed on a loved one, animals play a very intricate role in society. It is this intricacy that makes the question of animal rights a difficult one to answer, for without the animals we as a society would not enjoy many of the things we do, or have as many advances in technology and medicine.

The questions posed in this paper, should animals have rights? Can animals possess rights? and what might some of the implications be if animals are given rights? are not unambiguous. The six disciplines discussed in this paper all have differing views and perspectives with regards to animal rights. There may be no correct answer. It could be, as with other questions asked throughout history, that only time will tell what is to be society’s view on animal rights.

The questions should animals have rights? and can animals possess rights? are two completely different questions yielding different answers from the six different perspectives. Just because something (an animal or an infant) should have rights does not mean it can possess rights if society views it to be incapable, unworthy or unjust to do so. Such is the case with animal rights.

Our long history with animals leads one to believe that animals should have rights. We have lived side by side in close proximity to animals for centuries. They have always been a source of companionship and support for the human race. No other relationship has lasted longer than the human-animal bond, and it is for this reason that they should have rights. Humans have used animals in every imaginable way and it is up to us to give something back to those who have

given unselfishly of themselves throughout time. Humans for centuries believed they were aligned with animals and felt a kinship with our non-human friends; some early philosophers believed that animals possessed souls and are beings unto themselves. For these reasons, history says that animals should have rights. Yet, history also reveals that animals cannot possess rights. Throughout history animals have been viewed as human property. This view has allowed humans to exploit, oppress and discriminate against animals due to their differing mental capabilities. It is these differing mental capabilities that do not allow an animal to possess rights. To possess rights an animal must be able to participate in reciprocity, which they cannot do. They must also be able to determine right from wrong, which they cannot do. It is for these reasons that society, throughout history, prevents animals possessing rights.

From the perspective of medical ethics animals should and can possess rights. Medical ethics raises questions about the integrity and interests of animals. Although many feel that medical science may be stunted if animals are given rights, animals are a part of humanity and as such deserve protections under the law to guard their morally relevant interests. Those interests include the right to not be subject undue pain and suffering. Medical ethics protects the integrity and interests of infants and those with mental and physical handicaps who cannot speak for themselves. The interests and integrity of animals is no different, for they are living beings with their own purpose. Many in the medical field view animals as individuals, not things, and as such they should have laws that protect them. Even though protections are afforded laboratory animals to ensure their quality of life, the issue of pain and suffering takes precedence with many. It is this viewpoint, along with an acknowledgement of the importance of protecting and defending the interests and integrity of the animals that says they should and can possess rights.

Answers to questions of animal rights differ amongst religious circles. Eastern religions hold animals in higher regard than Western religions, believing them to possess souls and the ability to reach enlightenment. Judeo-Christian teachings believe that animals possess inferior irrational souls and that G-d gave humans dominion over the animals to do as we please. While animals possess consciousness, they do not possess self-consciousness and the ability to rationalize. It is this distinction that prevents Judeo-Christian teachings from granting rights to animals. While the bible and other teachings do stress defense and compassion for the weak, duties toward animals are only duties toward humanity (Levy). Religion stresses concern, compassion and defense of the of all G-d's creatures, but not through the granting or possessing of rights.

Society is in a state of constant change, and with that constant change current law must be altered and new laws must be written. Writing new laws is not an easy task to undertake; there are many things that must be considered and weighed before any legislation is passed and upheld. Although the attitude of society has changed regarding animals and their rights, society is not ready to accept them as having rights or possessing rights under the law. There are many arguments to make with respect to changing current animal law. The arguments concern the animals' ability to know they are property, how to determine which animals would have rights and how damaging awarding animals rights would be to the national and global economy.

The law views animals as property, and property is not entitled to many of the legal rights that humans hold. Animals do not know that they are property because they do not possess the cognitive ability to understand this concept. This makes it very hard to change current animal

law and award them rights. Determining which animals would be afforded rights and which would not becomes a heated debate as well. For example, if higher mammals with more sophisticated intelligence are granted rights, what about lower animals such as rodents and insects? Which criteria should the law use when determining animal rights? These are questions that society is not prepared to answer just yet. The national and global economy would be impacted greatly by changes in animal law. Many of the practices by business would have to be changed to ensure they were following the law protecting animal rights. Many businesses may move to countries where animal rights laws were not as strict or even non-existent. This could have a great impact on the global economy. Many are not ready to engage in such an undertaking as changing animal rights laws. Society appears to be content with current animal rights laws and protections. Animal law is a new and emerging field with many hopes and promises for the future of animals and their rights; with its influence, sometime in the future society may be ready to engage in animal rights battles.

Biological research shows that humans share 99 percent of their DNA with monkeys. Based on this, animals should have rights and they can possess them. We may be human but we are also animals and biologists are discovering everyday that we may be more like our animal counterparts than once considered. Humans share many of the same neural mechanisms that process fear and pain with other mammals (Grandin). More intelligent animals such as the ape possess social skills and the ability to reason, providing us with clues about our own biological history. If we are so closely related (biologically) to our non-human friends, then it would stand to reason they deserve rights and protections that humans enjoy. Biology suggests that animals can and should possess rights.

Physiological Psychology is the discipline that attempts to describe not only that a behavior occurred but also what physiological processes occurred simultaneously. This is the discipline that attempts to determine whether an animal can feel pain and suffer. Pain and suffering are two different states of being, and each does not require the other to be present in order to exist. Most will agree that animals feel pain; many will not agree that animals suffer. Only if an animal can suffer does it deserve to have rights. Many in the field believe that animals do not possess the cognitive ability to suffer because they lack a developed pre-frontal cortex. Not only do animals lack the ability to suffer; many believe that animals do not have the ability to reflect. The lack of these cognitive abilities, including the ability to understand, leads physiological psychology to say that animals cannot and should not possess rights.

This paper has looked at animal rights from the perspectives of six different disciplines. Each discipline has strong views with regard to animal rights. Each of those perspectives is valid in its reasoning and has points to be made with regard to animals and animal rights. Most are in agreement that animals should be awarded protection from unnecessary pain and suffering; many also agree that to give animals rights would be to “devalue humans” (Lubinski) and “dismiss innate human characteristics” (Lubinski), things that make humans different from other animals. But, why do these disciplines agree or disagree with granting animals’ rights?

The disciplines of biology, history and medical ethics hold that animals should have rights and

biology and medical ethics hold that animals can possess rights. These disciplines view animals as creatures unto themselves with morally relevant interests that must be preserved and protected. No other creatures on earth are more aligned with humans or have given more of themselves to better and further the human cause than animals. Due to our longstanding kinship and our shared biology with our non-human counterparts, animals should have rights.

The disciplines of law, physiological psychology and religion hold that animals should not have rights nor can they possess rights. These disciplines share in the belief that, due to the differing mental capabilities of animals, they are not capable of having or possessing rights. Our non-human counterparts do not possess the mental abilities to understand that they are not property; to suffer or to participate in reciprocity and it is the lack of these abilities that separates them from us.

The implications of granting animals rights are many. Most of the behavior we engage in with animals would have to be severely changed and altered. Not only would American society feel the implications of granting animals rights; the effects would be felt globally as well. Traditions such as hunting and fishing would be curtailed and corporations would have to change the manner in which they did business. The legal status of animals would change, giving their guardians an opportunity to legally fight and sue for injustices in a court of law. Animals would have some of the same benefits and protections that humans have and as such would be owed the same rights. Medical procedures would be performed using means other than animals. As a result advancements in medicine may suffer. We would have to change our thinking with regard to animals and their ability to suffer. Whether one believes that animals can or cannot suffer is irrelevant; they would be awarded rights protecting them from such a thing occurring. New laws would have to be established outlining what is and is not appropriate in keeping animals as pets and on farms. Yes, the implications of affording animals rights could be severe as each of the disciplines points out but some type of middle ground should be possible.

One possibility for animal rights that would not require a complete reworking of the current legal system and may provide a compromise between the interests of humans and animals would be to divide animal ownership into its legal and equitable components (Lubinski). This practice is common in title to real property and the ownership interests of trusts (Lubinski). Basically, the legal interest holder has legal title to the property, while the equitable titleholder receives benefit without having control over the property's disposition (Lubinski). This practice would allow animals' equitable self-ownership making them pseudo-persons (not personhood status) as opposed to property, yet humans would retain legal title of the animal and the ability to use and be responsible for the animal (Lubinski). Animals would then have recognition in a court of law, and humans could still use them for their purposes.

Another way to accept the concept of animal rights may be to change our views on animals. How people think about animals may be important with regard to how they feel about animal rights (Plous). Many factors, including speciesism, lead society to view animals as they do. We must give up the mindset that we, as humans, are better than our animal counterparts because we possess different skills and aptitudes than they do. This type of thinking does little to advance our relationship with animals. Society must ask itself if its' treatment of animals "is associated with our own sense of dignity and self respect (Wolf)". Society should extend those same

considerations to animals. If some perceptions could be changed, society may benefit by changing its attitudes on animal rights. This type of thinking may be keeping animals from receiving rights.

The world needs animals. It is up to us, the humans, to provide for them. Just as we have certain rights, should they not have certain rights? It is up to society to ensure they receive those rights and maintain their autonomy. As stated earlier in this paper, animals are not here for our benefit; they are here for their own benefit. Although they may not have the same mental capacities, they can still feel pain and suffer. Although they cannot speak for themselves, they still have voices that must be heard. Although society may view them as objects, they are living, breathing, feeling creatures that need our compassion and respect. Providing animals' rights may be one way society can give back to the animals all that they have given to us over the centuries.

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