

Good evening....

## “Humanism & Animal Welfare”

- Do animals have ‘rights’?
- What obligations have we to animals?
- All animals? Which animals?
- Does Humanism have anything particular to say about this?
- Does secular ethics have anything to say?

I’ll start by just listing a few of the sort of questions that I had in mind in setting out to prepare this talk...

# Agenda

- Why does it matter?
- What does moral philosophy have to say?
- What does the animal rights/animal welfare movement say?
- Which criteria can we/should we use to focus moral obligation, and with what consequences?
- Conclusions

Here's the overall agenda for the presentation. I'm going to start by considering the question Why does it matter?

After that, the three main sections will be What does moral philosophy have to say?

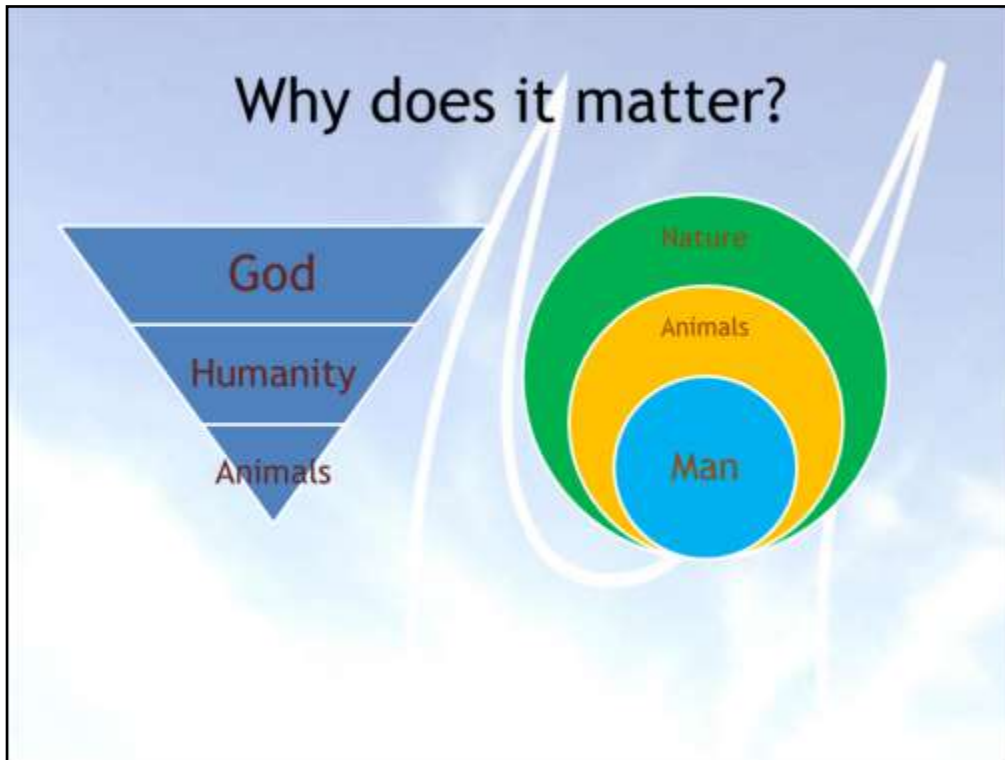
What does the animal rights/animal welfare movement say?

Which criteria can we/should we use to focus moral obligation, and with what consequences?

## Why does it matter?

The relationship between humans and animals in a Humanist account is quite different from that in the usual Theist account....

Starting, then, with “why does it matter?” Well, one reason WE ought to think clearly about this is that the relationship between humans and animals in a Humanist account is quite different from that in the usual Theist account



Here I've tried to show the difference graphically. In the view of many religions there is a hierarchy with us below God and above the animals, whereas the secular humanism view, the view arising from scientific discovery, sees us as belonging to the animal kingdom, which in turn is part of Nature. So graphically, there are two marked differences. Firstly we are talking about belonging rather than dominion, and secondly animals come between us and Nature, rather than below us. So animals should matter to humanists in a way that they don't matter to theists.

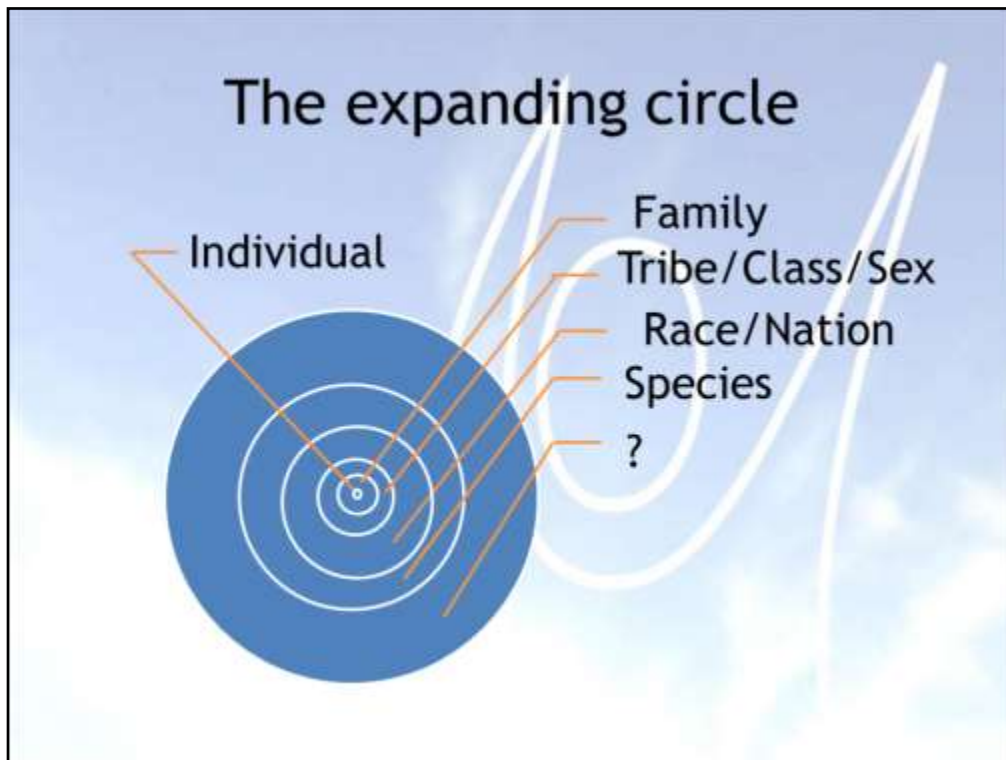
## Why does it matter?

The relationship between humans and animals in a Humanist account is quite different from that in the usual Theist account....

Theist	Humanist
Man made in God's image	We are evolved from non-human ancestors
We are "custodians" of the animal world	We are part of the animal kingdom

Here I've summarised it in words.....

The religious tradition that is most sympathetic to animals uses the idea of *custodianship* or something like that. And of course there is a strong tradition of concern for animal welfare in Christianity, for example in the case of St Francis. But in some ways a science-based view of the world that understands humanity as part of the animal kingdom leads even more strongly to the conclusion that the welfare of animals matters. This perhaps emerges most strongly of all from the contrast between the claim that Man is made in God's image and the claim that we ourselves are descended from other, earlier species.



One of the ideas that often comes up is the idea that as our ancestors evolved over the millenia, the focus of ethical concern has progressively widened. Back in the primeval swamps, the earliest creatures were only concerned with self-preservation, but then Darwinian evolution led to instinctive feelings of duty towards the immediate family. Cultural evolution then took over, and as interdependence became more important in our way of life, loyalties to a tribe or perhaps to a particular class of society became recognized. (I'm thinking for example of the classical philosophers who initially treated slaves as morally invisible, or the similar attitude to women in many cultures.) The tribe became generalised to a race, nations became a key term in describing our duties to others, and the ideas that culminated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights treat our entire species as making up the moral community. The argument is that the same evolution of insight COULD lead us to extend the concept of moral obligation to all sentient life, &/or to future generations, &/or to alien intelligences or even to earth-bound artificial intelligences. The fact that we could doesn't necessarily prove that we should. But it does imply that we should be open to these possibilities. We shouldn't just assume that we've reached the last circle.

## The Transhumanism Connection

- DNA manipulation and AI-augmented faculties could conceivably transform humanity into a “super-being”.
- Would we want such a descendant to treat people like us the way we treat other species today?

Another reason for looking at this issue is the connection to our current theme: the theme of transhumanism. DNA manipulation and AI-augmented faculties could conceivably transform humanity into a “super-being”.

Would we want such a descendant to treat people like us the way we treat other species today?

Animal ethics is thus a particular case of transhumanist ethics.

## The Analogy Challenge

- Animal defenders compare humanity's present treatment of other creatures to a "war", a "holocaust", and to "biocide (mass extinction)"
- How far are such comparisons justified?
- What are the implications?

Discussions in this field can get very intemperate of course...

- Animal defenders compare humanity's present treatment of other creatures to a "war", a "holocaust", and to "biocide (mass extinction)"

We don't have to like the language to recognize that there are questions here that deserve to be answered.

- How far are such comparisons justified?
- What are the implications?

# Agenda

- Why does it matter?
- **What does moral philosophy have to say?**
- What does the animal rights/animal welfare movement say?
- Which criteria can we/should we use to focus moral obligation, and with what consequences?
- Conclusions

So I come to the next section, What does moral philosophy have to say? - where I hasten to admit that I am not a professional philosopher but I have a long-standing interest in Philosophy, I've been to a City Lit course on ethics & I've just finished the ethics section of an OU module on philosophy, so I hope I'm qualified enough to introduce this section to those without such a background, while begging the indulgence of those more qualified than me.

## Animal ethics as a branch of Moral Philosophy

- This is a case-study in secular ethics and a contribution to the SE project
- I won't be setting out to defend any partisan viewpoint, except that there are no easy answers
- Many philosophers seem to shy away from the topic - avoid children and animals...

The first thing to say is that I see this as a case-study in secular ethics and a contribution to the Secular Ethics project

So I'll treat these philosophical questions as of interest in their own right and not just in the animal welfare context

I won't be setting out to defend any partisan viewpoint, except that there are no easy answers.

Sometimes I will own up to some of my own opinions in the hope that they are provocative, sometimes I will just be quoting opinions of others, and sometimes I will just point to a question which I will leave open to be thought about.

I have found many philosophers seem to shy away from the topic – avoid children and animals, I was once told half-jokingly at a philosophy lecture.

## Schools of Moral Philosophy

- “Golden Rule”
- **Consequence-based**
- **Duty-based**
- Rights-based
- Virtue-based
- Triax
- Method-based

As there are a whole lot of different schools of thought about what right and wrong should mean and it would probably take several lifetimes for us all to agree which one is correct, it seems best to go through them just looking to say what the implications are in each case. I'll start with the Golden Rule as it's the most universally known, then spend a bit of time on the historically most important schools based respectively on the consequences of our actions and the idea of moral duty. Then we have to think about rights which is a fashionable concept in this field, finally touching on Virtue-based and Method-based ethics, with Philip's "Triax" as the meat in that sandwich.

## The Golden Rule

- Decide how to act towards others as you would have them decide how to act towards you
- “Others” - how widely is that defined?
- Other species generally recognize no obligation to us...

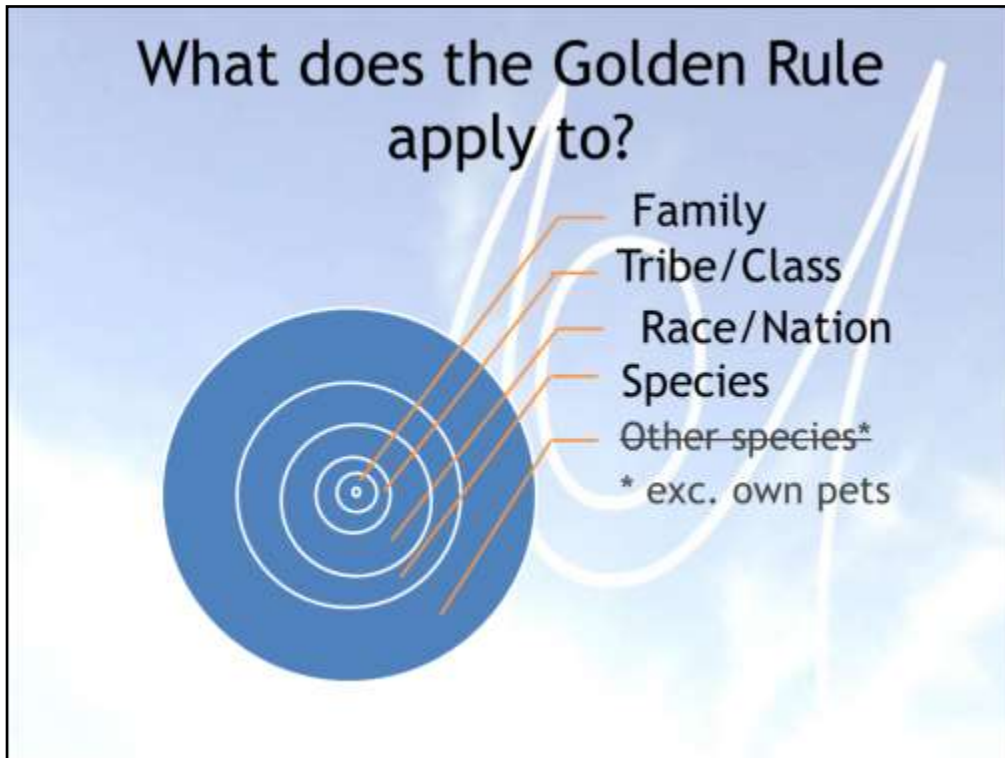
The problem with saying “DO unto others as you would have them do unto you” is that it could be interpreted as instructing a masochist to kick me on the shins.

So I think it’s better to say “Decide how to act towards others as you would have them decide how to act towards you” - where “decide” includes taking individual differences into account

The key word here is “others” – how widely is that defined?

And the answer is that in the main other species don’t give a monkeys about our pleasure and pain, so the reciprocal principle of the Golden Rule implies that we shouldn’t give them any consideration either.

Of course, there are exceptions: dogs show loyalty to human masters & mistresses, so according to the Golden Rule we should be loyal to them.



So, according to the Golden Rule, we conclude that the circle of moral obligation has no need to expand to include other species, except in a few cases such as some affectionate pets. (Though we all know that cats think that it is they who have domesticated humans...)

## Consequence-based

- Traditionally called “Utilitarianism” - “the greatest good of the greatest number”.
- Whether an act is good or bad would depend solely on its total experienced consequences - if we could predict them correctly.
- “The greatest number” ... of what?

Now we come to consequence-based ethics, traditionally called “Utilitarianism” and known by the slogan “the greatest good of the greatest number”.

This stems from the argument that the idea of acts being good or bad can only arise because there are consequences of acts that are actually or potentially experienced, so ideally we should act in such a way that results in the best outcomes. That’s just the starting point, of course, because in the real world you can rarely predict outcomes with much confidence, but you can’t discuss how to take account of uncertainty until you have agreed what you would like to do if you were certain, which is what this slide is trying to do. To summarise: whether an act is good or bad would depend solely on its total experienced consequences - if we could predict them correctly.

So let’s look at that slogan again: “The greatest number” ... of what?

Well if it’s consequential experiences that matter morally, that implies that we should take account of *all beings capable of experiencing the consequences*.

## Consequence-based

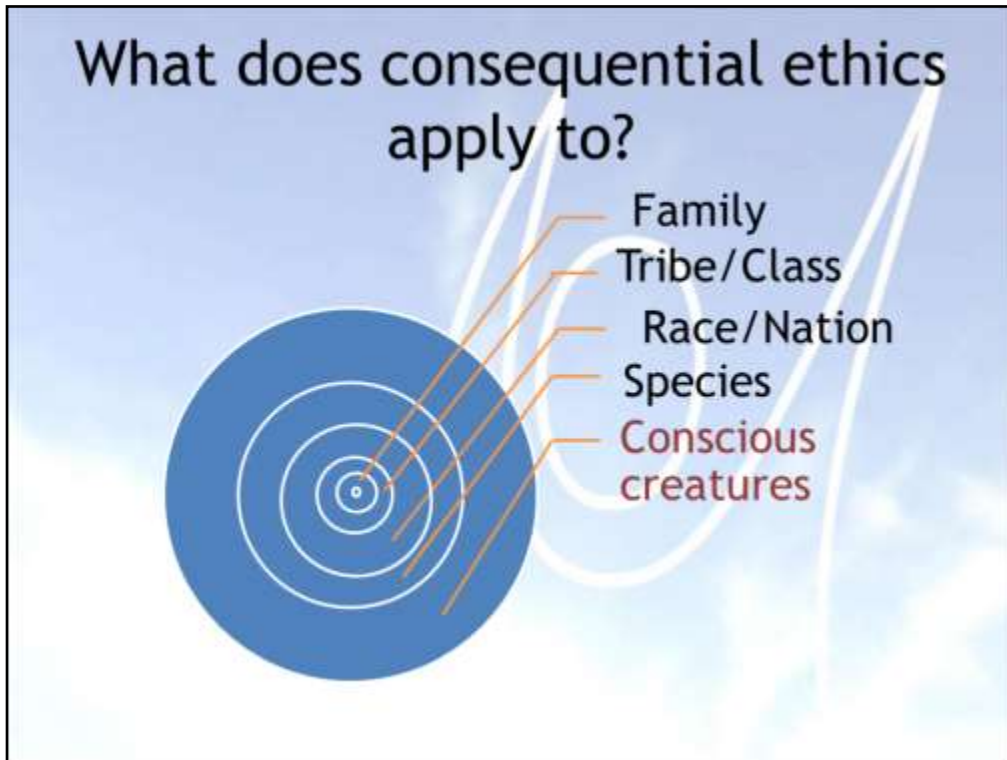
- Jeremy Bentham argued we should include “all creatures capable of suffering”

*The day may come when the rest of animal creation may acquire .. rights.. the question is not, Can they reason? not, Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?*

And that’s what Jeremy Bentham, the original cheerleader for Utilitarianism, argued: that we should include “all creatures capable of suffering”

He even said *The day may come when the rest of animal creation may acquire .. rights.. the question is not, Can they reason? not, Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?*

I do find that one of the more persuasive arguments.



So coming back to our expanding circle, consequential ethics does logically lead to putting other conscious creatures in the next circle.

## Consequence-based

- Utilitarianism includes considering the consequences of adopting, encouraging or breaking moral rules
- Consequences may belong to different “classes” which are not commensurable
- Utilitarianism implies the possibility of trading off one “moral good” against another of the same class

Before I leave consequences, there are a couple of complications that I ought to mention. Utilitarianism includes considering the consequences of adopting, encouraging or breaking moral rules

So for example, if you normally follow the rule of telling the truth, one of the consequences of telling a lie is to weaken the habit of truth. So Utilitarianism doesn't mean never recognizing moral rules, it just means taking these additional consequences into account in judging whether to follow them. I can't see any immediate implications for animal ethics from this refinement, but it will be relevant later when I discuss rights.

Bentham thought all good & bad could ultimately be boiled down to pleasure and pain, but J.S. Mill and later Utilitarians suggest that there are higher goods like a rewarding life with healthy emotional relationships that shouldn't be sacrificed just for the sake of dulling pains or enjoying extra pleasures. This distinction does imply that although simple pleasures and pains should be treated alike whatever the creature that experiences them, we can ask if there is a case for treating some of the higher goods of human experience as largely exclusive to our species, and perhaps more morally important than the experience of most animals.

Nevertheless, Utilitarianism implies the possibility of trading off one “moral good” against another *of the same class*.

So some medical procedure that reduced simple physical pain for a small number of people

at the expense of causing similar or greater pain to a large number of animals would still not be justified on Utilitarian grounds, as there, as there we are comparing consequences of the same class.

## Duty-based ethics

- Our moral duty is **always to follow those rules that we believe everybody else should follow** [roughly what Kant said]
- This implies crediting everybody else with and respecting those same attributes (rationality, free will) that we use in recognizing our duty: hence **“treat everybody else as individual ends in themselves, not as means to other ends”**

Now we turn to the main rival school historically, Duty-based ethics, in which the big name is Immanuel Kant.

In somewhat simplified language, Kant’s first principle of ethics is that our moral duty is **always to follow those rules that we believe everybody else should follow**

Note that this isn’t the same as what we would LIKE everybody else to follow, the belief has to be a rational one, and the rule has to be universal. So you can see that this is rather like the Golden Rule, but expressed more precisely and with some very specific implications.

It implies crediting everybody else with and respecting those same attributes (rationality, free will) that we use in recognizing our duty: hence **“treat everybody else as individual ends in themselves, not as means to other ends”**

which is roughly Kant’s second principle, though I emphasise he didn’t think this was a separate rule, rather a different way of looking at the first rule, with each being implied by the other.

## Duty-based ethics

- EG telling lies is wrong not because of the consequences of doing so, but as a matter of duty - because ultimately we have no right to falsify anybody else's understanding - it transgresses their autonomy, so to speak

An example of what this way of looking at things is that telling lies is wrong not because of the consequences of doing so, but as a matter of duty – because ultimately we have no right to falsify anybody else's understanding – it transgresses their autonomy, so to speak

I should point out that although Kant made the occasional polite reference to God, it's generally agreed that his philosophy works perfectly well without, and it is highly regarded by many secular philosophers.

When people speak of the dignity of humanity, for example, they are speaking in a Kantian way. Kantian morality is closely associated with the idea of mankind as it ought to be - potentially free rational beings - rather than with what it is. Indeed Kant maintains that 'freedom' or 'independence from being constrained by another's choice' is the 'only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his humanity.'

## Duty-based ethics

- “follow those rules that we believe **everybody else** should follow...” So who is “everybody else”?
- By implication, the “everybody else” we have a duty to has to have the attributes necessary for moral judgement
- So we don’t have a duty to non-human animals, *except as a means to another end*

So, back to our moutons, as it were, when Kantians say we should “follow those rules that we believe **everybody else** should follow...” well, who is “everybody else”?

Well, just as with the Golden Rule, by implication, the “everybody else” we have a duty to has to have the same attributes that we have in making our own judgements. The difference is that whereas the Golden Rule implies one-to-one reciprocity, Kant makes it explicitly universal. And even dogs are excluded by Kant since he didn’t see them as making rational, deliberative moral choices they way that we ideally do.

So we don’t have a duty to non-human animals, *except as a means to another end* (and that is an important caveat).

## Duty-based ethics

- For example, according to Kant, cruelty to animals is bad not because it hurts the animals but because it damages us.
- “this is why, in England, butchers aren’t allowed to sit on juries...”

For example, according to Kant, cruelty to animals is bad not because it hurts the animals but because it damages us.

“This is why, in England, butchers aren’t allowed to sit on juries...” he explained at the time - because they were assumed to have been so hardened by their trade that their moral sensitivity was called into question.

This may be an indirect argument for treating animals well, but that doesn’t stop it being a very important one.

## Duty-based ethics

- Note, the same argument might seem to imply no duty to infants or brain-damaged - they don't belong to the universe of moral agency either
- Accept the same argument - cruelty to children damages the cruel adult and the potential adult, so wrong as a means
- Or argue that all belong to a class of beings that has potential moral agency

Note, the same argument might seem to imply no duty to infants or brain-damaged people such as late stage Alzheimer sufferers – they don't belong to the universe of moral agency either, that's so say they don't have the capability to be moral agents, to make moral choices. This leaves Kantians two choices:

- Accept the same argument – cruelty to children damages the cruel adult and the potential adult, so it should be avoided as a means to an end.
- Or argue that we all belong to a *class of beings* that has potential moral agency

The last argument belongs to the philosophical notion of the self as something roughly connecting the same person at different times in your lives. If you can blame somebody for something they did last year, the argument goes, on the grounds that they are still the same person, then you whatever basic obligations you have to somebody when they are a normal conscious adult, you also have to them as an infant, or when they are in a coma, because, again they are the same person. Note that this particular argument doesn't extend to creatures that aren't rational moral agents at any time in their lives, so the analogy between animals and children breaks down.



So back to our expanding circle and see where duty ethics leads. We have a duty, according to this school to **animals as exemplars of our duty to each other.**

One might point that this argument applies equally to pulling the arms off a doll – or, to bring the argument up to date, to cruelty to online avatars. Both are indeed held by some to damage the perpetrator.

## Duty-based ethics

- Duty-based ethics do (IMHO) imply the existence of implicitly good or bad consequences, but they affect things like “dignity” or “autonomy” that aren’t *matters of degree*, the way pleasure, welfare etc are.
- Hence duty-based ethics doesn’t recognize the possibility of trade-offs as regards the ultimate ends of action

A few footnotes on Duty ethics before we move on.

Firstly, so-called Duty-based ethics do in one sense imply the existence of implicitly good or bad consequences, but they affect things like “dignity” or “autonomy” that aren’t *matters of degree*, the way pleasure, welfare etc are.

Hence duty-based ethics doesn’t recognize the possibility of trade-offs as regards the ultimate ends of action

... You can trade off the means but not the ends.

One way of thinking about this is that the verdict in a trial is a reflection of duty ethics, it has to be yea or nay, while the sentence is a reflection of consequence ethics, it can be adjusted to suit the circumstances.

## Duty-based ethics

- Other versions of duty-based ethics include explicitly religious codes that regard divine authority - or the authority of a divine document - as the source of duties
- Other secular versions simply insist on the duty to follow the norms of the society you live in, or of some revered leader...

Other versions of duty-based ethics include explicitly religious codes that regard divine authority – or the authority of a divine document - as the source of duties

Other, secular, versions simply insist on the duty to follow the norms of the society you live in, or of some revered leader...

The problem with all these versions is that we live in a plural society with competing norms, so this idea of duty begs the question of how to decide whose norms you follow. A good example is the question of kosher or halal slaughter, which I'll come to later.

## Duty-based ethics

- “To spread the concept [of animal rights] beyond our species is to jeopardize our dignity as moral beings, who live in judgement of one another and of themselves” (Roger Scruton, 2000)

Here is a modern philosopher reaching similar conclusions to Kant.

“To spread the concept [of animal rights] beyond our species is to jeopardize our dignity as moral beings, who live in judgement of one another and of themselves” (Roger Scruton, 2000)

Admittedly, he is referring to the terminology of rights rather than duties, in other words looking at obligations from the end that’s being done-to rather than the end that’s doing. But the reference to dignity, and his description of us as essentially moral beings with the ability to judge, is very much in the tradition of Kant, and there’s no hint of a trade-off between pros & cons.

## Rights-based ethics

- Has an honourable history - Thomas Paine, US Declaration of Independence, UN Declaration of Human Rights etc.
- Sometimes portrayed as a version of duty-based ethics (the rights of others are what determine our duties to them)
- But can also be seen as a particular kind of rule in a consequence-based context

This leads nicely into Rights-based ethics. I know Philip has a bit of an aversion to the idea of rights, but remember

it has an honourable history – Think of Thomas Paine, US Declaration of Independence, UN Declaration of Human Rights etc.

And there are also two different kinds of rights that need to be distinguished (perhaps Philip only dislikes one of them).

The first portrays it as a version of duty-based ethics (the rights of others are what determine our duties to them)

But can also be seen as a particular kind of rule in a consequence-based context

So in fact, this is arguably not really a separate school of morality, but a similar feature shared by both the main schools.

I'll look at these two interpretations in turn

## Rights-based ethics

- The rights-as-mirroring-duties view sees rights as either divinely awarded or inherent in the natural condition of life, or in the nature of morality.
- The “Animal Rights” movement often seem to assume this concept of rights as unquestionable - see this section of the talk later.

The rights-as-mirroring-duties view sees rights as either divinely awarded or inherent in the natural condition of life, or in the nature of morality. (I do find the idea of a Right to Life hard to derive from the “natural condition of life”, which has otherwise been described as “Nature red in tooth and claw”.)

In any case, the “Animal Rights” movement often seem to take this concept of rights as unquestionable – see the Animal Rights section of the talk later.

## Rights-based ethics

- The rights-as-adopted-rule is just another tool in the moral toolbox
- As a legal construct, rights avoid the need to prejudge exactly what actions might need to be resisted
- The “right to freedom of belief” is a good example

By contrast, the interpretation of “rights-as-adopted-rule” is just another tool in the moral toolbox

The great advantage of rights in this sense is that as a legal construct, Rights avoid the need to prejudge exactly what actions might need to be resisted

The “right to freedom of belief” is a good example. If somebody tries to act in some new way to impose beliefs on others, which lawyers have not previously addressed, then the presence of a statutory “right to freedom of belief” offers the immediate possibility of appealing to the Human Rights court.

So I don't think we should throw out the notion of animal rights just because of its “divine right” associations. At the least we should think of it as a tool to use if it works.

## Virtue-based ethics

- Compassion
- Kindness
- Respect for others
- Toleration
- Honesty
- Courage

Virtue-based ethics puts the focus on the qualities that one should have. The right thing to do is what a virtuous person would do. Here is a typical list of the qualities such a person should have.

## Virtue-based ethics

- Emphasis on personality development
- “Striking the happy mean?” (Aristotle)
- Compassion towards what? etc.

An advantage of this approach is that it puts emphasis on moral growth and the avoidance of extreme positions, or “Striking the happy mean”.

It doesn't suggest that answers are ever simple.

However, there is nothing in the list of virtues that tells us whether to include other species or not. In fact, this approach seems better suited to treating interpersonal dealings than questions of a more public nature.

# Schools of ethics

- Triax - PWV
  - Have Integrity (not lying to yourself)
  - **Be Kind**
  - Have Courage
- Be kind to whom?  
(Fellow humans, fellow creatures?)



Turning to Philip's ethical Triax as described on our website, the instruction that matters is clearly "Be Kind"

But kind to whom?....Yes, we can agree without any kind of analysis that somebody who kicks their dog isn't being kind, but a question about performing experiments on animals to find a cure for some awful disease is a choice between two interpretations of kindness, so I can't find any specific guidance here either.

## Method-based ethics

- “Constructivist” ethics - the only eternal moral truths are about right and wrong ways of constructing ethical systems
- One approach is that ethics should be *consistent with* what we know about the evolution and the workings of the human mind

Method-based ethics is the idea that the only eternal moral truths are about right and wrong methods of constructing ethical systems. Constructivism, as it is otherwise known states that moral truths can be neither chosen nor discovered, but rather must be constructed rationally in order to solve practical problems. For example, the question, how can we live together on terms acceptable to all is a question that has right and wrong answers.

The applied ethics that has come out of this school has mainly focussed on questions of social justice, with animals nowhere in sight, but as well as the “social construction” that this school has dealt with, there is “personal construction”, and so another method-based approach is that ethics should be at least *consistent with* what we know about the evolution and the workings of the human mind.

This mustn't be confused with the obviously dodgy argument that certain reactions are right because that's what our ancestors would have done. It's just saying that any account of morality that is based on a faulty model of the human mind is unlikely to be a sound account of morality.

## Method-based ethics

- Hypothesis: sound moral judgement is the result of the intellectual, intuitive and instinctive parts of the mind *acting in concert*
- Hence, while we can't derive moral conclusions *directly* from factual information, neither can we draw them *in isolation* from factual information

I'm using that as an excuse to smuggle in a personal hobby-horse, namely the hypothesis that sound moral judgement is the result of the intellectual, intuitive and instinctive parts of the mind *acting in concert*

This might seem pretty bland, but there are mountains of philosophical literature arguing that morality is ultimately just a matter of feeling, on the one hand, or ultimately a matter of reason on the other. I'm suggesting we shouldn't go down either of these routes.

Hence, while we can't derive moral conclusions *directly* from factual information, neither can we draw them *in isolation* from factual information

## Method-based ethics

- Thus we should keep our mind open to all new scientific and imaginative insights about the nature of other creatures
- But we also need to keep in touch with our “gut feelings” about animals - as long as they are informed by our reflective mind.

Thus we should keep our mind open to all new scientific and imaginative insights about the nature of other creatures

and not assume that questions of animal ethics can ever be settled once and for all.

But we also need to keep in touch with our “gut feelings” about animals – as long as they are informed by our reflective mind.

This leads into a later part of my agenda, by what criteria can other creatures be compared with ourselves?

# Agenda

- Why does it matter?
- What does moral philosophy have to say?
- **What does the animal rights/animal welfare movement say?**
- Which criteria can we/should we use to focus moral obligation, and with what consequences?
- Conclusions

But first we have to look at what the animal lobby has to say. (Here perhaps I should mention that I was brought up on a farm, in case you think that may be a cause of bias.)

## The animal lobby

How to Do  
**Animal Rights**  
...legally, with confidence

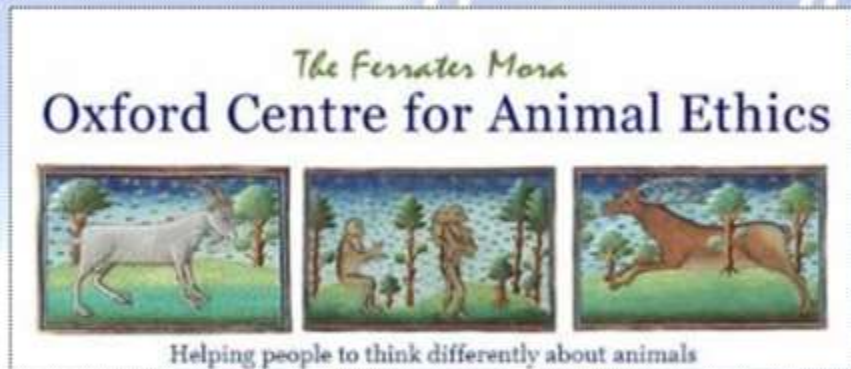


*Ben Isacat*

<http://www.animaethics.org.uk/>

This slide gives acknowledgements for quite a bit of this section to this downloadable book by a retired biologist who writes under the name Ben Isacat. I hoped he might to come to talk to us himself as he's a humanist, but he says he's past that now.

# The animal lobby



Director: Rev. Prof. Andrew Linzey

Another intellectually respectable source is the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, though this is very much in the Christian tradition. Andrew Linzey is a professor of theology and the centre is named after a Catholic, a prominent Catalan philosopher who was one of the first Catalan public figures to come out against bull-fighting. (His particular philosophical angle was that reality is a continuum, and demarcation lines such as those between humanity and animals are categories imposed on reality, not intrinsic to it.)

## The animal lobby

- 3 different branches - “animal welfare” “animal liberation”, “new welfare”
- The “new welfare” approach is roughly
  - Animal liberation would be a Good Thing
  - But it won’t be accepted in our lifetime
  - So let’s concentrate on animal welfare

There are three different approaches adopted in the animal lobby, going under the labels “animal welfare” “animal liberation” & “new welfare”. The first two tend to be at odds with each other.

The “new welfare” approach is roughly

- Animal liberation would be a Good Thing
- But it won’t be accepted in our lifetime
- So let’s concentrate on animal welfare

Whereas the animal lib movement regards any concern for welfare as unacceptably watering down the real objectives.

So as far as the arguments are concerned, it’s really the animal welfare and animal liberation branches that we need to look at.

## The animal lobby: welfare

- The “Animal welfare” approach is typified by the RSPCA
- Accepts superiority of moral claims of humanity
- But seeks to alleviate or eliminate all “needless” suffering

The “Animal welfare” approach is typified by the RSPCA. It accepts the superiority of the moral claims of humanity, but seeks to alleviate or eliminate all “needless” suffering.

I suspect that this last view is fairly generally accepted here, although some dogmatic rationalists might still take the same view of other species that the right-wing tabloids take of foreigners.

## The animal lobby: liberation

- The “Animal liberation” approach (e.g. PETA) includes two main strands:
  - Equal consideration
  - Animal rights
- Equal consideration is consequence-based
- Animal rights is duty-based

The “Animal liberation” approach (more like the line taken by PETA) includes two main principles, which are known as:

“Equal consideration”, which is consequence-based, and “Animal rights” which is duty-based.

## The animal lobby: Equal Consideration

- Developed by the utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer
- We should give equal consideration to the *comparable* interests of all species
- Thus pain felt by all individuals that can experience it should be treated as equal, irrespective of the species concerned.
- But it's OK to perform an experiment on animals if it would be OK on people.

Equal Consideration is the principle developed by the utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer, that is to say, we should give equal consideration to the *comparable* interests of all species.

So of course we don't worry about freedom of speech for animals, because that is an interest they don't share, it's not *comparable* between our species and others. But pain is apparently felt by many different species, so pain felt by all individuals that can experience it should be treated as equal, irrespective of the species concerned.

Another way of putting this is that we should avoid "Speciesism", which is discrimination *solely* on the basis of species attribution and not some other relevant criterion.

One reaction to this argument is that pain is particularly psychologically distressing to us if we recognize that it is *intentionally* inflicted by others, and that that is something which apparently isn't comparable with other species. From that point of view we should at least regard pain experienced by other species as to be avoided with the same priority that we seek to avoid *unintentional* pain experienced by humans.

But it's OK to perform an experiment on animals if it would be OK on people - or if the only reason it wouldn't be OK on people is something that isn't comparable - for example the question of consent is considered not to be comparable in the case of other species.

## The animal lobby: Rights

- The right to live free in a natural state
- The right to express normal behaviour
- The right to life
- The right to reproduce
- The right to choose their own way of life
- The right to live free from human induced harm

Turning to the animal rights strand of animal liberation, here is a typical list of what they say should be considered as rights

- The right to live free in a natural state of the animal's choosing
- The right to express normal behaviour e.g. food searching, grooming, nest building
- The right to life i.e. not be killed for human use
- The right to reproduce i.e. to pass on genes to the next generation
- The right to choose their own way of life: This form of words is intended to cover not being coerced into providing human entertainment or into experiments
- The right to live free from human induced harm e.g. hunger thirst molestation fear injury or disease

## The animal lobby: Rights

- Unclear whether these “rights” are interpreted as intrinsic or as a tool:  
“..benefits that people *wish to bestow on* .. animals can include....If you believe animals *have* such rights....”

It is unclear whether these “rights” are interpreted as intrinsic or as a tool: For example the list from Ben Isacat’s book in the previous slide as preceded by the words “..benefits that people *wish to bestow on* .. animals can include” as though they are a legal construct, but the list is immediately followed by the words “ ....If you believe animals *have* such rights....” as though they are intrinsic.

## The animal lobby: Rights

- Such rights said to stem from duty-based ethics, although part of the intellectual foundation for this is a universe of moral agency that animals don't belong to.
- The point is made that reciprocity can't be a foundation for moral value if we believe that the interests of future generations have any interest to us.

Such rights are said to stem from duty-based ethics, although as I have explained, part of the intellectual foundation for this is the idea of a universe of moral agency that animals don't belong to - ..& as I also mentioned previously, basing animal rights on the natural condition of life seems equally problematic.

The point is made that reciprocity can't be a foundation for moral value if we believe that the interests of future generations have any interest to us, since future generations can't do much to look after our interests (unless we like the idea of being prayed to, or anyway spoken well of, when we are no longer here!) However, if reciprocity is denied, it isn't made clear how else intrinsic rights can arise.

## The animal lobby: concerns

- Scientific experiments on animals - for medical purposes, for cosmetic testing
- Farming - meat, cruel practices, vermin
- Blood sports - hunting, bullfighting etc
- Ivory poaching, subsistence hunting
- Entertainment - circuses, zoos, pets?
- Ecological concerns - habitat destruction, extinction

Here I have listed the main concerns of the animal welfare & animal rights lobby

- Scientific experiments on animals - for medical purposes, for cosmetic testing
- Farming – obviously first of all that animals are bred to be eaten or otherwise used – more specifically, cruel practices, vermin
- Blood sports – hunting, bullfighting etc
- Ivory poaching, subsistence hunting
- Entertainment – circuses, zoos, pets?
- Ecological concerns – habitat destruction, extinction

I'll look at these in turn.

## Issues: “vivisection”

- Early vivisectors nailed live animals to boards (pre-anaesthetic) and cut them open to see how they worked - believing they felt no pain.
- Nowadays efforts are reportedly made to minimise pain in animal experimentation - is that enough?
- Difference between medical & cosmetic testing

To throw some light on the term “vivisection”, early vivisectors nailed live animals to boards (pre-anaesthetic) and cut them open to see how they worked – believing they felt no pain.

Nowadays efforts are reportedly made to minimise pain in animal experimentation – is that enough?

Some people make a distinction between medical & cosmetic testing - on the utilitarian grounds that relief of illness is a higher class of good than satisfying vanity

## Issues: farming

- Battery farmed poultry show many signs of anomalous behaviour most readily explained as “extreme stress”
- Re-designed abattoirs seem to be effective in reducing psychological stress
- Mass-production farming - holocaust analogy (40 billion chickens killed/year)

Farming is typically where animal welfare arguments come to the fore. I'll pick out a few examples.

Battery farmed poultry, where the birds spend their lives packed into small cages, show many signs of anomalous behaviour most readily explained as “extreme stress”, so while we can't directly read their minds, the best evidence we have suggests that the suffering is genuine.

If we do choose to kill animals, at least we shouldn't make it a terrifying experience if it doesn't have to be, and work fairly recently has shown that fairly small changes in the design reduces the apparent signs of panic.

Industrial farming is also where animal defenders draw analogies with the holocaust. 40 billion chickens killed per year in assembly-line fashion certainly doesn't show much reverence for life. Of course this analogy is reversing the usual one. In the concentration camps, people were treated like animals – stripped of individuality, commodified, transported en masses and so on – so if that's so terrible, doesn't that mean that treating ANY creatures like that is also terrible? Well, there are some vital differences, starting with the fact that the animals are deliberately given life in the first place, and continuing with the many ways in which their psychological response is hugely different.

At the end of the day the holocaust analogy seems to me to be designed to draw attention

from these differences.

## Issues: Kosher/Halal slaughter

- Take Halal/Kosher slaughter requirements, for example
- Does it cause more or less suffering?
- Denmark has just abolished death by bleeding unless the cow/sheep is previously stunned.
- The Jewish community has accepted the latter compromise.

Perhaps this is a good moment to look at the argument about different methods of slaughter. Take Halal/Kosher slaughter requirements, for example

Those who justify these methods claim that when the critical neck artery is cut, “the brain is instantaneously starved of blood and there is no time to start feeling any pain.”

There are competing video clips on the net showing halal slaughter with the animal apparently conscious and distressed in one case, and apparently dying like a Hollywood hero in the other, although as they cut the filming the second after they cut the neck it’s hard to tell. The primary justification is said to be to avoid any consumption of blood, so minimising suffering is likely to take second place if slaughter is performed on an industrial scale - just as with western methods.

A topical point: as from Monday, Denmark has just abolished death by bleeding unless the cow/sheep is previously stunned by a non-penetrative bolt gun. The Jewish community has accepted the latter compromise.

There is no mention of the Moslem community. I understand that the essential difference between kosher & halal is that to be halal the slaughterman has to face Mecca – which psychologically means he is reminded that he is being watched by Allah, and therefore is motivated to be as humane as possible, so perhaps not as arbitrary as it sounds.

## Issues: vegetarianism

- The “necessity” of meat for food is clearly relative when a significant proportion of the world is veg. already
- But ecologically, long food chains are more resilient.
- Arguably domesticated animals reared for food live a better life than wild ones
- Vegetable food supplies depend on starving rodents to death

The connection between concern for animal welfare and vegetarianism is far from clear to me. It's not that I think that eating meat is necessary, (obviously not when a significant proportion of the world is veg. already). Indeed, from the environmental point of view meat, and especially beef, uses more resources than vegetable foods on land that is suitable for both, and the methane produced by cattle is notorious.

But even the ecological argument isn't entirely one-sided. Short food chains may be more efficient but ecologically, long food chains are more resilient, so in parts of the world where rainfall is very unreliable, reliance on crops tends to carry higher risk of famine, whereas in animal farmland, animals and people share the hunger.

But even from an ethical point, it's arguable that domesticated animals reared for food live a better life than wild ones, especially if animal welfare practices are followed. Stopping rearing animals would be denying them the right to live in the first place, a life which may well be pleasant enough on balance.

Finally, there's the elephant-mouse in the vegetarian room, the fact that success in growing crops depends on keeping away or at least limiting the numbers of rabbits, rats and mice – inevitably starving rodents to death. (Mice may be small but they seem to be just as intelligent as cows or sheep, so why should we give their suffering so much less attention?)

## Issues: Blood sports, entertainment

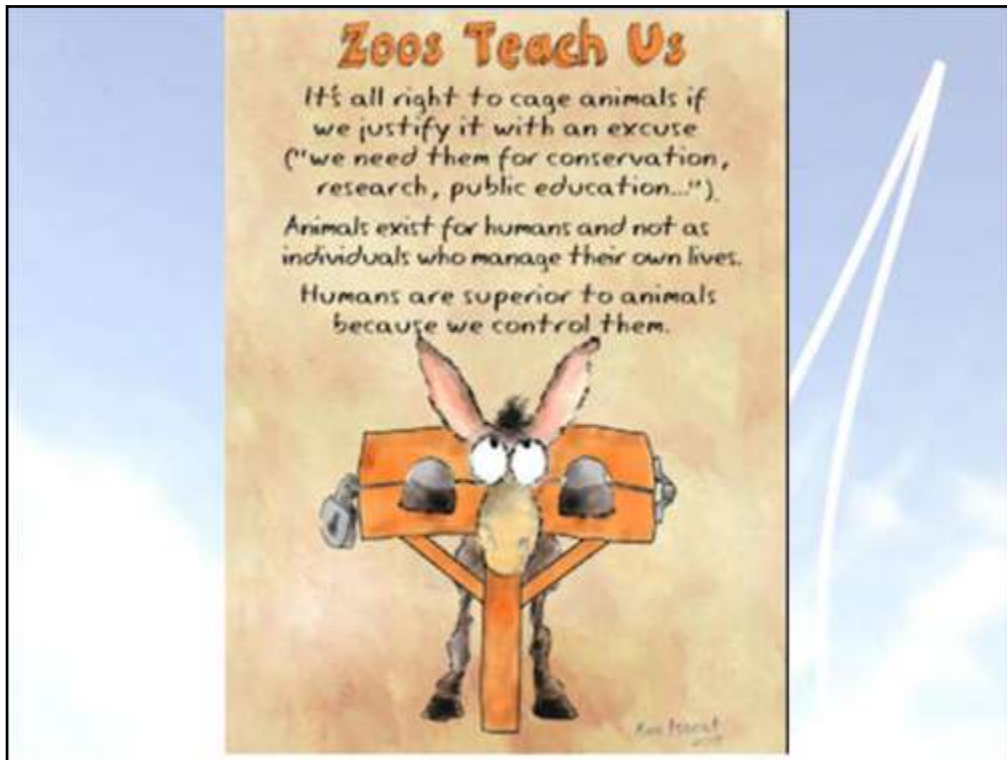
- Banning of blood sports is perhaps the easiest case to make (Catalonia has banned bullfighting)
- Less clear-cut in cases of vermin (foxes)
- What about performing animals?  
Dolphins? Racehorses?
- Zoos must play a role in saving species -  
educational argument

Banning of blood sports is perhaps the easiest case to make (Catalonia has banned bullfighting a couple of years ago, although that seems to have been partly motivated by the claim that bullfighting was an alien import from Spain).

Less clear-cut in cases of vermin (foxes). Often the case against fox-hunting is criticism of the motivation of those involved. However, from a liberal point of view the idea of a society run on the basis of judgmental rules about other people's motivations is a pretty slippery slope with the Taliban or similar tyrannies at the bottom of it.

What about performing animals? Circuses don't have a very good reputation. On the other hand dolphins often seem to enjoy playing with humans. And don't racehorses get a kick out of racing?

The old idea of zoos as a place for gawping at caged animals certainly had its offensive side, but a good modern zoo that looks after its animals sympathetically, helps to save endangered species, and providing genuine educational understanding of fellow creatures seems to me to have a pretty strong case.



- 4 However, Ben Isacat protests that zoos teach us other things. They encourage us to assume that it's all right to cage animals if we justify it with an excuse, and so on.

## Fur

- Why is the case against fur argued so much more strongly than that against leather?
- The association with vanity is one extra motivation - but footwear can be just as vain
- That relatively undomesticated species are concerned

Why is the case against fur argued so much more strongly than that against leather? Maybe it's because the animals usually worn as fur are either trapped in the wild, or anyway don't show the same signs of domestication as food animals. The association with vanity is one extra motivation – but footwear can be just as vain

## Issues: Species

- 1/3 [1/2] of all species may be lost by 2100 [2050]
- Maybe we should recognize a duty to other animal species even if not to individuals
  - For pragmatic reasons
  - As part of our heritage to be passed on
  - As part of the richness of the world

According to a “Warning to Humanity” published by 1500 ‘leading scientists’ in 1992, 1/3 of all species may be lost by 2100 . A recent book has upped that estimate to 50% of species by 2050, though I suspect a lot of that change comes from the much higher estimates of unidentified species of small creatures in threatened habitats rather than from an increased rate of loss.

Maybe we should recognize a duty to other animal *species* even if not always to *individuals* – not only for pragmatic reasons, but as part of our heritage to be passed on, or simply just as part of the richness of the world for its own sake. Well, I think we should.

## The animal lobby: dilemmas

- Can we pick and choose between rights and consequence-based ethics?
- Do we ignore mice destroying a harvest and causing a famine...?
- Do we ignore predators attacking a highly endangered species?
- “temporarily adopt utilitarianism”?

I'll finish this section with a few dilemmas for anyone addressing these questions.

Can we pick and choose between rights and consequence-based ethics? Let's take one of the examples mentioned by Ben Isacat. Do we ignore mice destroying a harvest and causing a famine...? The animal rights approach says we should, but the utilitarian approach justifies doing something about them.

Or to take another example, do we ignore predators attacking a highly endangered species? Again, utilitarian considerations might seem to outweigh the right of the predator to live its own life in its own way. (Conversely, of course, there's the case of an endangered predator threatening to rip some prey to shreds.)

Isacat suggests that such cases might justify “temporarily adopt[ing] utilitarianism”.

## The animal lobby: dilemmas

- “Consider each ethical theory in turn to find the best overall solution”
- If we take all ethical theories to be imperfect approximations there can be some sense in this - or we might say that duties can be inherent for individuals but constructed for governments
- Risk of choosing the theory that fits preconceived conclusions

Speaking more generally, he speaks of considering “each ethical theory in turn to find the best overall solution”.

It’s true that if we take all ethical theories to be imperfect approximations there can be some sense in considering them all in turn. We might reach the conclusion, for example, that duties can be inherent for individuals but need to be constructed according to their consequences in the case of government action. There is a precedent for this apparently “having your cake and eating it” in the law courts, where as I mentioned before some people reckon that duty ethics should govern the verdict and consequence ethics the sentence.

However, if you don’t have some such prior rule about which kind of ethics you use when, there is obviously a great risk of choosing the theory that fits preconceived conclusions - and thereby sacrificing all integrity.

# Agenda

- Why does it matter?
- What does moral philosophy have to say?
- What does the animal rights/animal welfare movement say?
- **Which criteria can we/should we use to focus moral obligation, and with what consequences?**
- Conclusions

So we come to the final main section, which criteria can we/should we use for deciding what creatures we have moral obligations to.

I should point out here that different moral obligations may arguably require the use of different criteria

## Criteria: structural

- “Our brain contains a horse’s brain, which in turn contains a crocodile’s brain”
- We share all but a little bit of our DNA with many other creatures, and some with all other creatures

I’ll start with two criteria of comparison based on similarity of structure.

It was Arthur Koestler who colourfully declared that “our brain contains a horse’s brain, which in turn contains a crocodile’s brain”

That is to say, the lower and inner part of our brain is structurally very similar to the entire brain of a horse, and the lower and inner part of that is structurally very similar to the brain of a crocodile.

Since the experience of pain in humans is found to be associated with activity in these very old parts of the brain, it does give us a good reason for assuming that the experience of pain is very similar in other mammals, and even in reptiles.

The second structural criterion of similarity is that we now know that we share all but a little bit of our DNA with many other creatures, and some with all other creatures.

Of course it is true that in some respects it only needs a little bit of DNA to make a huge difference in how an organism functions, nevertheless, I suggest this contemporary discovery does add to the degree of kinship that we should feel.

## Other criteria

- Are they “sentient” (eg can they suffer?)
- Are they conscious? “Subjects of a life”?  
Able to remember?
- Do they know they are conscious?
- Do they have a theory of mind? Empathy?
- Can they reason, foresee, plan etc?
- Can we communicate with them?
- Can they make moral judgements?
- Can we identify with them?

A lot of criteria of comparison have been suggested that relate roughly to how creatures behave or have experience

- We’ve come across the criterion : Are they “sentient” (eg can they suffer?)
- Are they conscious? “Subjects of a life” (Do they experience life subjectively)?  
Able to remember?
- More subtly, do they know they are conscious?
  
- Do they know that there are other conscious beings in the world? The usual terms are do they have a theory of mind? Empathy?
- Can they reason, foresee, plan etc? This is sometimes called having “sapientcy”
- Can we communicate with them?
- Can they make moral judgements?
- Can we identify with them?

With all these criteria available, how do we decide which are relevant?

Peter Singer suggested that for consistency we should apply the same criteria that we apply when accepting moral obligations to infants or people in terminal Alzheimers, which leads

to him to pick out sentiency and consciousness as the key features. I've already pointed out the view that a person is not just a person at an instant in time so we shouldn't just be applying criteria that apply at a particular stage in life. (After all, a sleeping person hardly meets any of these criteria, but that doesn't make it OK to rob them in their sleep; so perhaps the case to focus on to meet Peter Singer's requirements is a brain-damaged infant who will never meet any of the other criteria at any time in their life.

Another general point in looking at this list is that the answer doesn't have to be yes or no. The ability to communicate, say, may be a matter of degree, and likewise our degree of moral concern may be a matter of degree.

## Criteria: sentiency/suffering

- Can they **suffer**?
- Smoke detectors squeal when they detect conditions that threaten their survival
- Descartes saw animals as much like smoke detectors in this respect
- It's argued that showing a learned desire to avoid a stimulus is rational evidence that it causes suffering

Now I'll look at some of these criteria in more detail

The problem with suffering as a criterion, is how do you actually tell?

Smoke detectors squeal when they detect conditions that threaten their survival, and rock strata suffer extreme pressure from tectonic plate movements. We presumably agree that that's not the sort of suffering that matters, but how do you actually draw the line?

Descartes saw animals as much like smoke detectors in this respect, like the early vivisectors that I mentioned - So it doesn't seem to be self-evident.

Some people have argued that showing a learned desire to avoid a stimulus is rational evidence that it causes suffering; But a fairly simple artificial intelligence could show this sort of behaviour, so I don't think it's definitive.

## Criteria: Consciousness (1)

- How do you know that you are conscious?
- How do you know that I am conscious?
- How do you know that the consciousness of “redness” *feels* the same for me as for you?
- How can we mean anything when we talk about consciousness?

It seems that objective similarity to suffering has to be combined with consciousness to count. This is probably the most important and widely discussed criterion. Unfortunately it is one which is recognized as posing some of the most difficult questions in philosophy. As it's also highly relevant to the wider issue of transhumanism, so I've devoted two slides to it. Let's start with the question:

How do you know that you are conscious? As the Confucian Master Zhuang put it one morning: I do not know whether last night I was a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man.

How do you know that I am conscious? This is known as the other minds problem – Descartes thought that we can only know about our own consciousness, J.S. Mill thought it was more accurate to say that we can only detect our own consciousness, we have to infer other people's from the fact that they have pretty similar brains and behave in pretty much the same way – but that's not really a problem because we have to infer things all the time.

But a related question is - how can I know whether the feeling of looking at red is the same for me as it is for you? You can find out if you are “colour-blind” but beyond that there doesn't seem to be any way of checking, and as there many specific differences between individuals, simple projection of our own experience of such a detail doesn't seem justified either. This sort of thing is officially known as the “hard problem of consciousness”.

Wittgenstein answered this sort of question by asking: How can we mean anything when we talk about consciousness? It is the nature of communication that we can only meaningfully talk about something that IS interpersonally intelligible, so for Wittgenstein

the possibility of the sensation of red being different for different people couldn't possibly mean anything. Now the implication of that is, if we can't communicate with other species, how can it mean anything to ask if they are conscious? They might behave in a way that resembles a conscious being, but that doesn't prove anything unless we know what that behaviour feels like from the inside, which apparently can't mean anything with regard to a creature that is intrinsically incapable of discussing it.

## Criteria: Consciousness (2)

- What does it feel like to be deaf and blind from birth?
- ***What does it feel like to be a bat?***
- Or a giant squid? Or an ant colony?.....

Now consider the question: What does it feel like to be deaf and blind from birth? Are we actually capable of imagining it, with our imaginations conditioned by sight and hearing? Conversely how can somebody who is deaf and blind from birth possibly understand what it is like to have vision and hearing?

The contemporary philosopher Thomas Nagel took this sort of question as a starting point when he wrote a famous article entitled: ***What does it feel like to be a bat?***

The point being that bats have a sense that we don't have, as well as apparently lacking faculties that we do have. Unlike Wittgenstein he feels that there has to be something that it feels like, but we should admit that not only do we have no idea what it is, but we can't currently envisage any way by which we might find out.

At least bats are mammals. Consider how much harder it is to decide what it feels like to be a giant squid, given that their brains are spread out through their limbs, but nevertheless they seem pretty smart at finding their way out of mazes. Then what about an ant colony. I doubt that ants are conscious, but then neither are neurons. Can consciousness arise from millions of dumb ants interacting, the way it does from dumb neurones interacting?

## Criteria: Theory of mind

- Few species pass the “mirror test”
- Crows’ behaviour can be affected by knowledge of what other crows can see
- “Goodbye (croak), and thanks for all the road kill”

Being aware that you are conscious and that other beings can be conscious are closely related, and are discussed under the heading of “Theory of Mind”.

For example, if you leave a mirror in the cage with some chimpanzees, and put some coloured sticker on their forehead, the next time they look in the mirror they often put a hand to their forehead. Only a few other species pass an equivalent test. It’s thought to show that they have a “theory of mind”, that is they have a picture of the world with their conscious self present in the world – though the interpretation is controversial.

There have been experiments where crows stop hiding something when they are become aware that they are being watched by another crow, and more complicated variations that are very hard to explain unless birds in the crow family have a pretty clear-cut theory of mind. This might suggest that crows should come near the top of our list of creatures for which we have compassion. We’re a long way from seeing things that way at the moment, but maybe that just reflects ignorance. “Goodbye (croak), and thanks for all the road kill” (Just wondering if there are any Douglas Adams fans in the room....)

## Criteria: Intelligence

- Problem-solving intelligence is shown by e.g. apes, dolphins, crows, octopuses & giant squid, even tortoises...How distinct is this from reason?
- The rudiments of linguistic ability are shown by some primates, dogs, birds.
- Memory of complex details is quite widespread - seagulls can recognize individuals in a crowd

I think there is still a lot to learn about which species have what kinds of intelligence, it's so difficult to avoid testing that's biased by preconceptions. Here are just a few examples that I've picked up from the New Scientist.

Problem-solving intelligence is shown by e.g. apes, dolphins, crows, octopuses & giant squid, even tortoises...How distinct is this from reason?

I'm talking about things like finding the way out of an unfamiliar maze in an efficient way. Rats and mice can learn the way out after running about in an apparently random fashion, but at least one tortoise, possibly a genius of its species, has used strategies more rational-seeming than that.

The rudiments of linguistic ability are shown by some primates, dogs, birds. By this I mean the learned association of particular signals with particular contexts. One of the more striking cases is that some individual mimic birds (possibly minah birds) have learnt to associate different human words that they mimic with different contexts. Having a bird say hello when you arrive and goodbye when you leave must be a bit creepy.

Memory of complex details is quite widespread – seagulls can recognize individual faces in a crowd. (I'm referring to cases where officials who have removed seagull nests get recognized and dive-bombed in a crowd even when wearing different clothes.)

## Criteria: Moral sense

- Many other species show strong family bonds, some like dogs show great loyalty, elephants show empathy...
- Is this “moral behaviour” or “drives that resemble moral behaviour”?

Many other species show strong family bonds, some like dogs show great loyalty, elephants show empathy - which might be thought of as a basic requirement for morality.

The question to ask in every case is: Is this really moral behaviour as we understand it, or just “drives that resemble moral behaviour”? Certainly in some cases we can reasonably assume the latter, but it’s very difficult to understand all the subtleties of, for example, dog behaviour in this way. It’s not just that they can show guilt, but they can show it before they have seen signs of disapproval, suggesting that they can understand that they have done something that will be disapproved of. I doubt if any dog has yet wondered whether obedience is necessarily a well-founded standard of morality, however.

## Criteria: Identification

- We can only understand the “feelings” of animals to the extent that we can project our own onto them.
- This can be a matter of deliberate analogy or cautious subjective identification or some combination
- As an example of analogy, there is the recognition of “neurotic” behaviour resulting from overcrowding

The last criterion I want to consider is identification, that is to say that we can only understand the “feelings” of animals to the extent that we can project our own onto them.

This can be a matter of deliberate analogy or cautious subjective identification or some combination.

As an example of analogy, there is the recognition of “neurotic” behaviour resulting from overcrowding.

## Criteria: Identification -The Anthropomorphism problem

- The criterion of subjective identification leads to a “cute & cuddly” bias
- Dogs are admired for their loyalty... is this rational?
- Robins are favoured over magpies, but the latter seem far more intelligent; etc

Now I come to the problem of the anthropomorphic element in animal ethics. In some ways we can't help being anthropomorphic – our own experience of existence is the only evidential basis we've got to extrapolate from to other creatures.

Yet if subjective identification is to be taken as a method for determining what obligations we have, then we risk going down the line of giving far more attention to cuddly creatures with large, infant-like eyes, which rationally speaking we can recognize as entirely arbitrary and unjust.

To take another example of anthropomorphism. Dogs are admired for their loyalty – some people say they prefer dogs to humans for that reason. But how rational is this? Dogs are bred and trained to be loyal, they can't help it, they don't know any better. So are we really saying we admire the behaviour of dogs because it reminds us of behaviour that we would admire in humans who do have more choice in the matter? – though then again, blind loyalty to a tyrant isn't necessarily admirable.

Similarly, Robins are favoured over magpies, but the latter seem far more intelligent; people say they hate magpies because they kill the fledglings of other birds – but that is what they have evolved to do, there is rationally nothing to admire or despise in this behaviour except for what it reminds us of in humans.

# Agenda

- Why does it matter?
- What does moral philosophy have to say?
- What does the animal rights/animal welfare movement say?
- Which criteria can we/should we use to focus moral obligation, and with what consequences?
- **Conclusions**

So in conclusion, I've tried to identify some of the key questions that have emerged.

## Conclusions: the challenges

- Does morality arise from a shared moral sense or from recognition of comparable experiences (suffering etc.)?
- Are rights inherent or agreed?
- How can we tell what animals experience - or what should we assume if we can't??
- Why should vermin & carnivores be treated differently?

Firstly there's the question of moral philosophy that has such a big implication for our attitude to other animals –

Does morality arise from a shared moral sense (which tends to exclude other animals) or from recognition of comparable experiences (suffering etc.) (which tends to include them)? A good test case is: Have we intrinsic obligations to severely brain-damaged infants?

Secondly, when we talk about rights, do we mean inherent rights, or rights agreed as a legal construct?

Thirdly, How can we tell what animals experience – or what should we assume if we can't??

Finally, the elephant in the room question, how can we with moral consistency treat vermin any differently from the animals we are asked to be morally concerned about, and should we also be worried about saving the prey of carnivores from a frightful end, even it means feeding lions on giant vege-burgers?