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THE MORAL VALUE OF ANIMALS

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Abstract

This Thesis focuses on the tyranny that human animals exert on non-human animals. The thesis reflects on the anthropocentric vision that is typical of our society and tries to analyze which factors are considered as valid reasons for not taking into account non-human animals' interests . It then reports theories that instead state that there are no morally valid reasons not to grant moral rights to animals.

Introduction

The history of Western thought has been marked by anthropocentrism. Western anthropocentrism has been represented by the basic idea that there is a radical ontological difference between man and other living beings, a difference that has been justified by the fact that, as Ovidius affirms, the creator of the world after having conceived the animals, felt the necessity of a superior being capable of dominating all others: and Humans were born. (Ovidius, *Metamorphoses*, 1.75.) The first appearance of an explicit reference to animal rights dates back to 1792, due to an episode with ironic aspects. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft, writes *A vindication of the rights of Woman*, in which she argues that women should have rights. The same year the philosopher Thomas Taylor produced a short text that explicitly derides the idea of rights granted to women, writing *A vindication of the rights of brutes*, here he states that to seek recognition of women's rights will also force animal rights to be recognised. Exactly one hundred years after the publication of Wollstonecraft's work, appeared in 1892, the volume *Animal's Rights considered in relation to Social Progress*, by Henry Salt, an English philosopher, in his work he affirms the existence of animal rights: Animals have rights and those rights consist in the limited freedom to live a natural life. Around the mid-seventies of the twentieth century animal rights become a relevant theme, within this panorama animal movements were born, largely born thanks to the work of Peter Singer *Animal liberation* in 1975.

Nowadays the treatment that is reserved to non-human animals is becoming one of the most important ethical question among philosophers. In particular, the question seems to be "What are the requisite that guarantee to be included within the principles of justice"? Some affirm that humans are different from the rest of the natural world, in so doing they argue that when considering non-human animals, moral consideration is neither required nor justified, and so it is possible to approve certain human practices towards nonhuman animals that are cause of suffering, pain, discomfort and death. Rawls, for example affirms that we, as humans, have "duties of compassion and humanity" towards nonhumans animals and so we should refrain from treating them cruelly. Nonetheless they are "outside the scope of the theory of justice"¹ (Rawls 1971). According to Rawls and who have been influenced by him, principles of distributive justice only applies among agents who are connected to one another as participants in a "cooperative venture for mutual advantage", and this seem to exclude animals from those principles. In contrast to this view, a growing number of scholars argue that the differences between human animals and nonhuman animals do not provide a valid defense for denying non-human animals moral consideration. If that is true, many of our habits are source of terrible ethic mistakes that would be based on the passive acceptance of speciesism, we tolerate cruel treatments towards other species members that would result as outrageous if

¹ Blake, Michael and Smith, Patrick Taylor, "International Distributive Justice", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2015 Edition)

executed on humans .Clearly , what moral consideration is and what it amounts to , has been cause of much disagreement .

Speciesism

1.1 - An Introduction to Speciesism

A morally considerable being is a being who can be wronged. Speciesism claims that only humans are morally considerable. Following this theory implicates treating members of one species as morally more considerable than members of other species even when their interests are analogous. More precisely, speciesism does not consider interests of equal strength to an equal extent if the species to which the individuals belong is different. The term was coined in the 1970s, by Richard Ryder, who defined speciesism as a “prejudice based upon morally irrelevant physical differences”. Speciesism, in his view, is a prejudice that is of the same nature as racism and sexism, so it results in being unfounded. Ryder argued that *"Since Darwin, scientists have agreed that there is no 'magical' essential difference between humans and other animals, biologically-speaking. Why then do we make an almost total distinction morally? If all organisms are on one physical continuum, then we should also be on the same moral continuum."* (Ryder 2010). The term speciesism, is frequently used by those who claim animal rights, who argue that speciesism is morally wrong, since a different moral treatment of individuals can not be dictated by factors such as physical differences or belonging to another species because species membership has no moral validity. Being speciesism a widespread belief among humans-animals it is possible to state that speciesism plays an important role in justifying cruelty towards individuals that do not belong to human species.

It is possible to identify few common speciesist paradigms:

- Human Supremacism : considering humans animals as absolute superior to all the others, this vision implies the exclusion of all nonhuman animals from the rights, freedoms, and protections that are classically attributed to humans.
- Considering certain nonhuman animals to be worthy of a certain moral value because of an arbitrary affinity, familiarity, or usefulness to humans. It would involve humans promoting rights for an animal species X over rights for an animal species Y, because of happenstance similarities that X have to humans and that Y do not.
- Considering some animal species superior to others, even with the awareness that their mental capacities are very similar.

1.2 – Arguments in favor of speciesism

A common argument in favor of speciesism is the conviction that humans are justified in exploiting other species because humans have the moral duty of defending their own species. The philosopher Carl

Cohen affirmed in 1986: "Speciesism is not merely plausible; it is essential for right conduct, because those who will not make the morally relevant distinctions among species are almost certain, in consequence, to misapprehend their true obligations."² Cohen underlines that racism and sexism can not be morally justified because there are no relevant differences between the sexes or races. Between people and animals, instead, he claims, there are essential differences, from his point of view animals can not be qualified as owning what is defined a Kantian personhood, and so can not own rights.

Ayn Rand's Objectivism holds that only humans have what Rand called a conceptual consciousness, and the capacity to reason and evolve a moral system. She comes to the conclusion that humans are therefore the only species entitled to rights. Objectivist philosopher Leonard Peikoff argued: "By its nature and throughout the animal kingdom, life survives by feeding on life. To demand that man defer to the 'rights' of *other* species is to deprive man himself of the right to life"

Douglas Maclean, questioned if different species can be included under the concept of human morality, observing that animals were generally held exempt from morality. Maclean thus suggests that morality only makes sense when it concerns human relations, the further one gets from it, the less it can be applied.

The British philosopher, Roger Scruton, regards anti-speciesism movement and the request for animal rights as "the strangest cultural shift within the liberal worldview", because the idea of rights and responsibilities is, in his view, distinctive to the human condition, so and it makes no sense to enlarge them beyond our own species. Scruton in fact argues that the concept of rights is directly correlated to the one of duties, so if animals have rights then they also have duties, which animals would continuously violate.

1.3 Argument against speciesism

The idea that animals have the right to possess their own rights within human communities starts to spread at the end of the XVIII century. This was the century where individuals that had always been subject of discrimination, such as slaves and women, started to have their own rights. The philosopher Jeremy Bentham, was the first that proposed to implement an ethic system that was able to incorporate all animals within the same moral community. Bentham claimed that animals should not be subject of unnecessary and useless suffering, but he never affirmed that humans should stop exploiting them. He had thus an utilitarian perspective of antispeciesism that is based on the equal consideration of interests.

Richard Ryder claims that there is the strong emergency of bringing to light one of the most terrible moral mistake that marks the anthropocentric society, that is the clear refuse to treating nonhuman beings in

² Carl Cohen *"The case for the use of animals in biomedical research"*

an equal manner , justifying this practice through speciesism . His thought can be easily catalogued as antispeciesist. The antispeciesism approach affirms that :

- Abilities of feeling , interacting with the extern environment , manifesting the will , having social relationships are not human race prerogatives .
- The attribution of that capacities to nonhuman beings imply a big change in their ethic status that could be even compared to the one that is normally recognized to human beings .
- If that is true , it is also clear that an essential change in the human-nonhuman beings relationship is necessary .

Thus , following the antispeciesist theory , is possible to affirm that the kind of discrimination that is based on species , just like discrimination that is based on race, is prejudicial; because these are not characteristics that can be considered valid when it comes to making moral claims. So, speciesist actions and attitudes are prejudicial because there is no *prima facie* reason for favoring the interests of beings belonging to a certain species rather than those of the beings belonging to another species .Belonging to a given species is a morally irrelevant characteristic , and as morally irrelevant characteristic can not be used as the basis for a theory that holds that human beings deserve a moral consideration that is not owed to nonhuman beings. It is certain that humans have created a moral system as well as a big range of relevant practices that create a sort of separation between humans and the rest of the animal kingdom. Nonetheless, even the “human” category itself could be morally contested. Some scholars, in fact, argue that racism not only is a matter of discrimination and prejudice, but rather a mechanism of “dehumanizing” humans beings belonging to a certain group, so according to this thought, speciesism is not exclusively focused on discrimination, but it can rather be considered a central tool for creating human supremacy or exceptionalism.³

Peter Singer advanced a strong argument against speciesism: The principle of equal consideration of interests (PEC). In his view the fundamental condition that allows an agent to have interests is the ability to feel pain, so that is a sentient being . When this condition is satisfied ,the equality principle imposes , that his interests in not suffering must be taken into account no matter what is his species of belonging, his sex or his race, those are in fact morally irrelevant characteristics when it comes to evaluating interest’s importance.

It must be acknowledged that humans are not equal, they do not have the same physical features, do not possess equal talents , equal thoughts or equal skills. We all have different moral capacities, different intellectual abilities , different level of attachment to other humans , different communicative capacities

³ Christine M. Korsgaard “Just Like All the Other Animals of the Earth:Moral and Religious Attitudes towards Animals and Our Animal Naturein the Philosophies of Hume and Kant”

and different possibilities to feel pain and pleasure .Therefore if the request for equality was based on real equality among humans, then we would have no reasons to make that request . A white racist man, claims that white men are superior to men of color, but that is false , even though there are clear differences among individuals, there are many men of color that possess in a significantly higher level all the capacities that are considered meaningful . He also affirms that equality is a “moral idea“ that can not be considered as an assertion. From a logic point of view there is no compelling reason to assume that a factual difference in capacity between two persons justifies any difference in the amount of consideration to be given to their respective needs and interests. “Equality principle of humans is not the description of a real equality , but is rather a prescription on how human beings should be treated” . If the possession of a higher level of intelligence does not authorize one human to use another for its purposes, how can it authorize human animals to exploit non-humans animals for the same purpose? according to Singer , on the basis of the equality principle who accepts the PEC must acknowledge that it applies to nonhuman animals as well as to humans. Because both animals and humans are capable of feeling pain, for example, both have an interest in avoiding it. Indeed, Singer holds that the capacity to feel pain is the condition of having any interests at all. If the PEC was considered to apply only to humans, then membership in human species would count as a morally relevant aspect on the basis of which one could favor the interests of humans being over the like interests of nonhuman animals.

“Racists violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of their own race when there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race. Sexists violate the principle of equality by favoring the interests of their own sex. Similarly, speciesists allow the interests of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case”. Singer (1990)

Another influent argument against speciesism has been advantaged by Tom Regan .He does not directly side against animals’ suffering , but he is more focused on accomplish a complete critique on our cultural system that legitimate us to understand nonhuman animals as mere resources that we can exploit as much as we want .

II-HumanExceptionalism

Human exceptionalism is the conviction that human beings are unconditionally or essentially different than all other animals, so the belief that humans are superior to them in many ways . It is often argued from a religious point of view that humans are superior since they are the product of special creation by God. Even though science has demonstrated that the difference between humans and other animals is a difference in terms of degree and not kind ⁴ , arguments for human exceptionalism are rooted in our belief , and typically based on qualities that are perceived to be possessed only by humans. Culture and language, for example are commonly presented as proof for this position; On the other hand, some anthropologists such as Craig Stanford maintain that culture is not an unique feature of humans; it has been demonstrated that other species such as primates and birds reveal the ability to develop tools and also behavioral variation depending on the regions. The most common way of understanding human exceptionalism is to affirm that human animals have special abilities that non-human animals do not possess and it is on the basis of these capacities that human animals have moral status and other animals do not. Few of the abilities that are considered to be exclusive of humans are :thinking abstractly, establishing family ties, using language ,learning other languages ,solving social problems, starting wars, expressing emotions .Nonetheless, both scholars and popular work on animal behavior confirm that many of the capacities that are thought to be unique of the humans , occurs in non-human animals too. Many species of non-humans establish long lasting kinship ties, furthermore all animals living in socially articulate groups have to face and solve numerous issues that inevitably arise in such groups. Non-human animals negotiate their social environment by being attentive to the emotional status of the other individuals of the group.

Jane Goodall, is a primatologist and an anthropologist. She spent over 56-years studying wild chimpanzees and how they develop social and family ties. What comes out of her studies is that chimpanzees are more similar to humans than is generally thought; they are able to establish strong ties, they are able to be kind and affectionate, they can also express emotions in a way that results to be very similar to that of humans. In particular, her report on the death of the healthy eight year old chimpanzee Flint , just few weeks after his mother, shows that emotional pain can have a devastating effect on non-human animals (Goodall 2000).

⁴ Animal Minds and the Foibles of Human Exceptionalism, Marc Bekoff, Huffington Post

It appears that most of the abilities that are affirmed as distinctive of human beings, have been observed, even if in less elaborate forms, in non-human animals. Thus approaches that try to set behavioral and cognitive boundaries between humans and non-humans animals remain controversial , for this reason human exceptionalism ,sustained by human distinctive cognitive capacities, is hard to defend when it comes to thinking hard about the moral status of animals.

Non-human animals are conscious and smart, they know how do to adapt to changing environments. The versatility and flexibility of their actions show clearly they are not machines, but instead actively thinking and feeling beings. Donald Griffin, who gave a fundamental contribution to “cognitive ethology” (the study of animal minds), confirmed that the capability of non-human animals to adapt to arbitrarily changing conditions shows that they are conscious and able to assess what it is needed to be done in a given situation. Humans, other mammals and vertebrates share the same areas of the brain that are fundamental for consciousness and processing emotions. The anthropocentric view that only humans have sufficient mental capacities for complex forms of consciousness is scientifically denied. How we consider other animals in relation to ourselves is greatly influenced by social, political, and environmental implications. The philosopher Steven Best offers a powerful analysis of why human exceptionalism, is a incorrect view and how this view has serious consequences on how humans conduct their lives in relation to other animals when they view their self as “members of a distinct species in relation to other species and Earth as a whole...”(Best). He also gives a complete review of recent research in cognitive ethology to support the argument that humans share many features with other animals. Thanks to science we are now aware of the emotional , cognitive, and moral capacities of a wide-range of non-human animals.

Clearly, according to Best ,this awareness forces to rethink human “uniqueness” and dispense with speciesism. Humans do have unique , non-human animals, on the other hand , as Best points out have abilities and traits that humans do not possess. All the information that we now have about animal minds does not support human exceptionalism, so we should need to consider this factor and apply it to our relationships towards animals. Best concludes, “If humans have for so long failed to understand animal minds it is because their own stupidity, insensitivity, and deep speciesist bias have for so long blinded them.”

2.1 Personhood

There is another important aspect that is thought to distinguish humans from non-humans animals, that is the “personhood”. Christine Korsgaard, for example, affirms that humans “uniquely” face a problem: normativity. This problem is caused by the reflective structure of the human consciousness. Humans have the capacity of thinking about their desires and ask themselves if their desires are reasons for actions, this capacity, make humans able to step back from the mere impulses in order to determine, with rationality, whether and when act on them. Korsgaard, thus, suggests that humans face the problem of normativity in a manner that non-humans animals are not able to do.

Personhood, is the condition of being a person. Expressing personhood is a controversial topic in both law and philosophy. According to law, only a legal personality or a natural person is entitled to have rights, responsibilities, protections and legal liability. Personhood continues to be a topic of international debate, the notion of personhood is not universal, it varies according social and cultural factors. In philosophy, the word and the concept of person is very debated. According to the "naturalist" tradition, a person is any agent who possesses consciousness who is indeed capable of framing representations about the world. Charles Taylor, in his work *“What is Human Agency?”* on the other hand criticize the naturalistic view of a “person” claiming that the concept of “person” can not depend on a “performance criterion”, because otherwise, animals and machines that show to possess the same abilities could not be distinguished. Taylor, therefore propose a different theory on what a “person”. He introduces the concept of “strong evaluation” and suggests that a philosophical understanding of personal identity requires an understanding of human moral identity. Human identity, he writes, “is defined by our fundamental evaluations. The answer to the question ‘What is my identity’ cannot be given by any list of properties of other ranges, about my physical description, provenance, background capacities, and so on. All these can figure in my identity, but only as assumed in a certain way.”⁵ Humans have the ability of reflective self-evaluation, that includes the more specific ability to recognize all the fundamental components of our conception of what is a good, on which we rely upon in order to act morally. In Charles’ view, “the notion of identity refers us to certain evaluations which are essential because they are the indispensable horizon of foundation out of which we reflect and evaluate as persons.

Some philosophers and those involved in animal welfare, believe that certain non-human animals should also be considered to be persons and thus be entitled of all the privileges that personhood guarantees.

Proponents of human exceptionalism on the other hand, have counteracted that humans should establish a strict demarcation of personhood based on species membership in order to prevent dehumanization and horrors such as genocide.

⁵ Charles Taylor, *“What is Human Agency?”*, *Human Agency and Language. Philosophical Papers 1*, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

2.2 Rational Persons

Arguably, personhood is not coextensive with the whole humanity, yet , the whole humanity is considered worthy of moral considerability. Part of the human population, such as : infants, people with advanced forms of autism, children, or people affected by Alzheimer , do not possess personhood, so if we had to adopt this view , many beings, that we treat as morally considerable, would be excluded from consideration by this account . This problem, in literature, is generally known as the “marginal cases” problem.

Allen Wood (1998) argues that “ all beings that potentially have a rational nature, or who virtually have it, or who have had it, or who have part of it , or who have the necessary conditions of it, should be directly morally considerable “. ⁶

The argument from marginal cases regards the moral status of non-human animals. Its exponents hold that if, the senile, human infants ,the comatose , and disabled people are considered to have direct moral status, animals then must have a similar status, since there is no known morally relevant capacity that those marginal-case humans have that non-human animals have not. The only “merit” that they have is that they belong to the human species, which is a morally irrelevant characteristic that can not be considered as a valid reason to attribute a moral status ; having a moral status is a direct attribution to a right to life, right to dignity and right to freedom.

2.3 Sentience

“The day has been, I grieve it to say in many places it is not yet past, in which the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated ... upon the same footing as ... animals are still. The day may come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *ossacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps, the faculty for discourse?...the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?” ⁷ (Bentham)

⁶ Gruen, Lori, "The Moral Status of Animals", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta

⁷ Bentham, Jeremy. "Chapter XVII". An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation.

Sentience is the capacity to feel , to experience sensations , sentience then is the fundamental feature necessary for the capacity to suffer and feel pleasure .Advocates of animal welfare, argue that any being which has the capacity of feeling pleasure and pain, is entitled, at a minimum, to protection from unnecessary suffering. Even if animal-rights advocates may hold a different view on what rights should a sentient being have. Sentiocentrism , illustrates the theory that sentient agents are the center of moral concern; according to Sentiocentrism, all and only sentient agents have intrinsic value and moral standing, while the rest of the natural world has only an instrumental value . According to this view , thus humans animals and other sentient beings, have moral value , and thus their interests must be taken into account. According to Sentiocentrists , discrimination between sentient agents which belong to different species is Speciesism , so an arbitrary discrimination.

The philosopher Jeremy Bentham, in his work *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* , revealed his own reasoning in a comparison between cruel animal exploitation and slavery. Modern utilitarians, such as Peter Singer ,suggest that there is no morally justifiable way to exclude sentient beings from moral consideration , even if they do not belong to the human species.

III-The idea of animal rights

...“animals are treated routinely, systematically as if their value were reducible to their usefulness to others, they are routinely, systematically treated with lack of respect, and thus are their rights routinely, systematically violated” . (Regan)

Christine M. Korsgaard affirms “Animals are not mere objects: animals, at least the ones I am concerned with here, are sentient beings with lives and interests of their own. So we should conceive our relationships to other animals in moral terms , not merely in terms of power. If we regard the other animals not merely as property , but as fellow creatures with a stake in what happens in this world, then their subjection to the human species raises issues of justice, not merely of kindness.”

The idea that animals have rights seems worrisome because of its practical implications, it would mean that some, or all, non-human animals are entitled to the possession of their most basic interests, so that animals would then be considered worthy of the same moral consideration that is reserved to humans animals. Therefore our activities that inevitably hurt or kill animals would be undermined.

Many of us do not agree with the idea of equivalent moral considerations of both human animals interests and non-human animals interests . According to Immanuel Kant’s conception of rights , rights are set in morality , and thus could exist independently of any positive law, therefore because cruelty anesthetize human’s feeling of sympathy and empathy , cruelty towards animals is wrong, and it is wrong since it is

contrary to man's duty to himself. On this line, Christine M. Korsgaard claims that animals do have rights, but that are of a distinctive structure. Many of the rights that are reserved to human beings, are held against individuals. Animals, then, Korsgaard argues, have rights that are against human beings as a group, so against humanity, thus have right to be treated by human beings in a way that is consistent with what is good for them. Traditional moral philosophy makes a distinction between perfect and imperfect duties. A perfect duty is an obligation of doing a particular action indeed is what is called a directed duty, meaning that is addressed to someone in particular, someone who is damaged by its omission. The duties of justice are commonly considered perfect duties. On the other hand, an imperfect duty, is not specifically owned to anyone in particular, so the duty is not specific about the actions that should be done. According to Korsgaard, those that are in need for aid, have an imperfect right. Korsgaard then agrees with Kant's, when she affirms that animals are "passive citizens", therefore they have the right according to which we should take in consideration their interests while making laws.

Peter Singer is an Australian philosopher, and in his book *Animal Liberation*, he identifies the capacity to suffer as the vital characteristic which attributes to a being the right to have equal moral consideration. According to Singer, in fact, the capacity of feeling pain or pleasure is the prerequisite that an agent should have to have interests.

If an agent feel pain or pleasure, there is no moral justification to refuse of considering his interests in not suffer. If an agent does not suffer or can not feel pleasure, there is nothing that should be considered, because pain is the only plausible line border for consider other's interests, so any being that has an interest in not suffering deserves to have that interest taken into account. Singer formulates a clear ethical principle, the principle of equal consideration of the interests of all animals on the basis of which we can determine which of our practices involving non-human animals are justifiable, and which are not; applying this principle to our life we can make our behavior fully consistent.

Singer's central argument is associated to the utilitarian idea that the only ethical measure of good is the one of "the greatest good". He affirms that there is no valid reason not to apply the principle of equality to non-human animals. As stated by Peter Singer, the real nature of the principle of equal consideration of interest imply that it has to be applied beyond our own species, this principle in fact implies that our concern for others' interests should not depend on what they are like, what capacities they possess⁸. According to Singer what really matters is the nature and the strength of the interests in question, not whose interest are. Many philosophers have sustained the equal consideration of interests, but only few were able to recognize that this principle, is applicable beyond our own species. So he completely disagrees with the Speciesism theory. If a being is sentient, there is no moral justification for rejecting to take that suffering into consideration independently of the nature of the sentient being, sentience is the only limit, all the other reasons, are not morally valid, "To mark this boundary by some characteristic like intelligence or rationality

⁸ Peter Singer, "Equality for Animals?" Excerpted from *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge, 1979, chap 3

would be to mark it in an arbitrary way. Why not choose some other characteristic, like skin colour?” (Singer)⁹ According to Singer, a multi-factor perspective should be adopted when considering interests. The multi-factor perspective is a perspective that takes into account the nature and the relative weight of the interests of the individuals in question. It is then possible to think of interests as scalar; an interest can be crucial, important and replaceable, when there is a conflict of interests, crucial interests, of course, will always override important interests, which in turn will always override replaceable interests. So, animals, have an interest in not suffering which is a crucial interest, and most humans have an interest in eating animals, if there are other things to eat, that interest is replaceable, animals would have the stronger interest, and would be morally wrong to violate that interest by killing animals for food if another option for food is available. Singer offers three distinct elements that are the evidence that animals can feel pain: their behavior, the nature of their nervous system and the evolutionary utility of the pain. Of course Singer accepts the idea that animal rights could not be the same as human rights. About the infliction of suffering on animals, Singer is very clear. On the other hand, he could not give a straight answer about killing animals, as he says “When we come to consider the value of a life, we cannot say quite so confidently that a life is a life, and equally valuable, whether it is a human life or an animal life” (Singer), the value of a life is clearly a difficult ethical question that depends on infinite factors.

Another very interesting view, was given by Tom Regan, he was an American philosopher, author of numerous influencing books on philosophy of animals rights. From his books is possible to understand that in his view non-human animals are what he calls “subject-of-a-life”, just like humans, so if the idea of giving a value to human life is commonly accepted no matter his\her rational capabilities, then being consisted imply to accept that also non-human animals’ life deserve inherent value and hence moral rights. The essential and basic right that human and non-human animals all possess is the right to never be treated merely as a means for the ends of others. However, the right is not intended as absolute. Since cases in which respecting someone’s right not to be harmed result to be so important that another’s right not to be harmed must be overridden. In those cases the miniride principle or the worse-off principle should be applied. The miniride principle argues that when facing the overriding of the rights of many innocent beings versus the rights of fewer innocent beings, with the assumption that each being involved would be equally harmed, in cases like this, applying the miniride principle means that, the rights of the few should be overridden. Whereas the worse-off principle imply that, when the beings involved would not be harmed in an equal manner, the right action would be to override the rights of who would be less worse-off after his rights have not been respected. This relates to animals rights because from Regan’s point of view, when compared to the death of a person who is in a vegetative state, the ending of an animal life means the loss of more opportunities. So in this case the non-human animal life would have much more value. Steal a non-

⁹ *Vd 7*

human animal's life is a very important question that deals with the morality of each of us and our sensitivity towards beings that have the ability of reasoning and suffering.

Regan regard himself as an advocate of animal rights , he was committed to a number of goals including :

The total elimination of the use of animal for science purposes

The abolition of commercial animal agriculture

The dissolution of commercial and sport hunting and trapping

From Regan's point of view , what is fundamentally wrong , is not the way in which animals are treated that vary from case to case, but the whole system . The system , indeed , allows human-animals to view non-human animals as their resources ,that are on the earth just to serve human's needs , so that animals exist because humans can benefit from them , since this view is accepted, in our system, what harms them does not really matter, or starts to matter only when it concern us personally. Regan asserts that the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture is necessary , making rearing procedures "more humane" would not be enough ; it is necessary for people to change their beliefs before they change their habits .The process of change would be very complicate, exhausting, demanding and needs the efforts of the education system, the media means , political power etc. .Regan believed that the idea of animal rights have not just emotion on its side but rather it has reason to exist .Regan , criticizes the contractarianism theory and the utilitarian theory. According to contractarianism, since morality is a set of rules that individuals voluntarily agree to respect , as it happens when the parties of a contract sign the latter , those who understand and accept the term of the " contract" are directly covered by it and consequently protected by the contract. Contractors can also enjoy the protection spelled out by other contractors in case in which they are unable to understand morality , thus , children for example theoretically lack rights , but they are protected by the contract because there are other beings that care for them , so people then, have duties involving these children, duties that regard them, but not duties to them. The duties are towards other beings that care for them , usually their parents. As it happens for children, some animals are object of the sentimental interest of some individuals, companion animals for example , even if they lack rights , will be protected because of the sentimental attachment that individuals have for them . According to contractarianism , then each of us have not a duty directly to the animals but rather towards people that care for them. In the case of animals for laboratory , for example, our duties are at vanishing point , because their pain results to be acceptable since no one cares about them .And yet , it seems rationally certain that , was a child or a retarded elder tortured, he or she would be wronged, not other humans that care for them . Since this is true for human animals , it is not possible to deny the same in the case of non-human animals. Humans have some duties directly to animals just as they have some duties directly to each other.

In "The case for Animal Rights", Regan also describes other two theories , that he does not believe to be able to offer an adequate theory ;

The first is what he calls the cruelty-kindness view , which states that humans have a direct duty to be kind to non-human animals and a direct duty to avoid cruelty towards them. According to Regan , acting kindly does not mean acting rightly , kindness, notwithstanding is a virtue that should be encouraged , simply can not carry the weight of a theory of a right action, the same for cruelty , cruelty is a tragic human failing, but at the same time the absence of cruelty does not guarantee that who is acting is avoiding what is wrong , so in line with what Regan affirmed, neither the lack of cruelty or acting with kindness could answer questions about moral right and wrong.

The second theory that he criticizes is utilitarianism .

Utilitarianism is based on two principles ; the principle of equality according to which every being's interest count , and similar interests have the same importance. The second principle is the one of utility: the right act is the one that will bring the best balance between frustration and satisfaction for everyone that are affected by the outcome.

Utilitarianism so , might seem the right option because of its uncompromising egalitarianism: everyone's interests have the same value of everyone else , discrimination that contractarianism may justify is disallowed in utilitarianism, however ,what has value for utilitarianism is not the individual , but rather his interests , thus according to utilitarianists, individuals have not an *inherent* value. According to Regan we must accept that all who have inherent value , have it equally regardless the race, sex , religion, and so on. The value of a being , is independent of his usefulness , he proposes thus , another view that he believes to be rationally the most satisfactory moral theory ,he calls it “ the right view” . According to Regan , *the right view* , is the best in explaining the foundation of human duties to one another and the moral duties that human have towards non-human animals. Regan , insists that is true that humans have many abilities that non-human animals do not possess, but this does not mean that they have less inherent value,consequently this is not a valid reason to treat non-human animals with less respect that the one reserved to humans . “It is the similarities between those human beings who most clearly, most non-controversially have such value, not our differences, that matter the most. And the really crucial, the basic similarity is simply this: we are each of us the experiencing subject of a life, a conscious creature having an individual welfare that has importance to us whatever our usefulness to others. We want and prefer things, believe and feel things, recall and expect things . And all these dimension of our life , including our pleasure and pain , our enjoyment and suffering, our satisfaction and frustration, our continued existence or our untimely death-all make a difference to the quality of our life as lived, as experienced , by us as individuals. As the same is true of those animals that concern us (the ones that are eaten and trapped, for example) they too must be viewed as the experiencing subjects of a life, with inherent value of their own.” ¹⁰ (Regan).

¹⁰ *The Case for Animal Rights*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, p. 305-312.

The right view, unlike contractarianism repudiates every form of discrimination , and unlike utilitarianism , do not justify evil means to reach good results. Some perhaps may think that non-human animals do have inherent value , only less than humans have, but Regan argues that this view lacks of rational justification. There are no reasonable arguments , claims Regan ,to affirm that perhaps their lack of reason, autonomy or intellect is the proof that they have less inherent value , if that was true , we should think the same of retarded children or the mentally deranged . All who possess inherent value, then , have it equally , no matter if they are human animals or non-human animals. To accept *the right view* , have clear implications for science and farming . *The right view* in the case of the use of animals in science is categorically abolitionist, animals can not be treated as resources . Therefore , the commercial animal agriculture should be totally eliminated. Regan's view is absolutist , every practice that treats animals as means is considered wrong by him, and therefore should be abolished.

3.1 The interconnection between human rights and animals rights

Representative democracy is the most common kind of democracy that is currently adopted, nearly all modern western democracies are representative democracies. Faith in human rights is an integral part of all representative democracy. Human rights are moral values that describe certain standards of human behavior and are generally protected as natural rights. They are ordinarily understood as inalienable, they are essential rights that a person simply because is a human being is entitled to have and which are "inherent in all human beings", notwithstanding of their country, location, language, religion, cultural origin or any other status. They are universally valid and they are equal in the sense that they are the same for everyone. Being holders of moral rights means that others are not morally free to harm us and are not morally free to interfere with our free choices; sustaining this, means establishing that others are not free to limit our freedom . Tom Regan tries to explain what are the historical reasons , which from his point of view are unsatisfactory ,that led to the establishment of moral rights to which humans animals are entitled, which however are not applied to animals and things:

Humans have rights because humans are human: this is a partially correct but totally irrelevant idea, This statement in fact, means that humans have rights because they belong to a particular species , the human species.

Humans are protected by human right because humans are persons:

Here, according to Regan it is necessary to clarify the concept of person, among philosophers is commonly recognized as person, an individual able to morally respond of his actions, provided that all humans are holders of moral rights, it is not possible to justify the fact that all human beings have rights because giving this meaning of person, millions of individuals are cut off, as children and infants for example, They do have rights, yet none of them could be considered morally responsible for their actions.

Humans have rights because humans are self-conscious:

Some argue that beings who are unable to understand that they are mortal, cannot claim their right to life, because it is not possible to understand the concept of death unless they are self-conscious, these philosophers conclude that only self-conscious beings are holders of the right to life. This answer is not satisfactory; as psychologists teach us, a child is not able to understand the idea of his own death until he is 9-year-old, this means that hundreds of millions of humans would not have the requirements to claim the right to life.

Humans have rights because humans belong to a moral community:

Philosophers who support this response, define as a moral community, a community in which moral rights are claimed and understood, this response therefore makes the possession of rights independent of individual abilities this because all human beings are members of a moral community, but the fact that one idea is claimed and understood by an entire community does not prove the veracity of the same.

Humans have rights because humans have a soul:

Many religions, both ancient and modern, teach that humans possess immortal souls. This doctrine varies from religion to religion, but believing that humans possess a soul is irrelevant in order to explain why men have rights, in fact believing that we have a soul and therefore thinking that there is something after death is in no way a valid explanation of why we have rights while we are alive.

Finding these reasons unsatisfactory, Regan highlights the ways in which human beings differ from each other (sex, ethnicity, culture, etc.), despite all the differences that are typical of human beings, there are, however, some aspects common to the holders of moral rights;

According to Regan in fact, all human beings possess moral rights, and possess them in the same way, because we are subjects of a life, because we are all aware of the world and are aware of what is happening to us, indeed we all have the right to life, physical integrity and freedom. What happens to us affects us as it affects the quality and duration of our lives. The set of values that define this idea makes us equal in a way that justifies our moral equality. From a moral point of view therefore, according to this idea, the less gifted do not live to serve the interests of the more gifted, the former are not used as a means to reach the interests of the latter. From a moral point of view, each of us is the same because each of us is an equal someone, not something, is a subject of a life and not a life without subject.

As subjects of a life therefore we are all equal since we are all in the world,

As subjects of a life we are all equal because we are aware of the world

As subjects of a life we are all equal because what happens to us is of our interest whether or not it is of interest to others

As subjects of a life then we are all equal since there is no one above or below

As subjects of a lifetime therefore we are all equal since we are all morally similar¹¹

After having found the reasons that make human beings entitled to have moral rights, Regan explains that those principles are expandable to animals too, because they happen to be subject of a life too. Therefore he claims that animals should have rights , just as humans do.

The possibility of animals having rights depends on a question : are animals subject of a life ?

Common sense suggests that animals have needs and will , they have the will to stay alive and to live a free

life , is also suggested by their language , which although it differs from ours is quite clear. : Animals, as

Darwin affirmed , have mental abilities that differ from ours in degree yes, but not by typology , faculties

that characterize human mind, in fact can be also found in that of non-human animals , The theory of

evolution tells us that if we examine nature with an unbiased eye, we will find a large amount of similarities

,especially in the species that are very closes to us from the phylogenetic point of view, according to Darwin

, the high mammals not only experience pleasure and pain, but also “Anxiety,affliction,discouragement,

desolation

,joy,love,tenderness,devotion,anger,anger,determination,hated,anger,anger,patience',surprise,wonder,fear,horror,shyness” (Regan)

Just like us, animals are in the world, they are aware of the world and they are aware of what is happening to them.

Sometimes those whose rights are violated are unable to understand the injustice they have suffered, this is what can happen to children, for example. Because of their vulnerability, children are easy prey of those who seek to benefit from their exploitation. What are our moral obligations when human beings unable to defend themselves are used as means? Regan asserts that we have a moral duty to intervene, to take a stand in their defense, we owe our assistance to these victims, our help is their right. reasonably , the less human beings are able to defend their rights, the more it is our duty to do so for them. The same is not less true when the victims are non-human animals. We have the duty to intervene for them, the duty to take their defenses. Our help is something they are entitled to. Their total inability to defend their rights does not diminish, but rather increases our duty to assist them

¹¹ *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*, published by Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, (2004).

3.2 Objections to the idea of animals rights .

Animals rights is a very important question especially because of the practical implication that they would have if they were accepted .Industries which exploit animals use billions of them; animals whose lives are destroyed, whose physical integrity is damaged and whose freedom is denied. All this would be ethically unacceptable once their moral rights have been recognized. all human practices which infringe animals' moral rights should therefore cease. Most importantly, however,

The idea of animals rights do seem outrageous to many people now. "Many people think that even if we have duties of kindness and humanity to animals, these duties do not arise from any rights on the part of the animals themselves, and should not be the grounds for giving animals legal rights" (KORSGAARD)¹².

More specifically Christine M. Korsgaard identifies which are the reasons that push most people to consider the idea of animal rights as unreasonable:

Animals are property, and property cannot have rights.

Following the tradition of Roman law, legal systems normally split the world into persons and property, treating human beings as persons, and almost everything else, even non-human animals, as property. Human beings are the subjects of both rights and obligations, as well as the right to own property, while objects of property, considered to be for the use of persons, have no rights at all. Non-human animals, of course, are conventionally classified as property , companion animals as the property of individuals or organizations, while wild animals as the property of the state. For understandable reasons, there can seem to be a kind of incoherence in conceding rights to property, in particular rights against the owners of the property.

Consequently, some animal rights advocates have proposed that all non-human animals, or that non-human animals with a certain degree of cognitive sophistication such as primates and cetaceans, should be reclassified as legal persons.

Korsgaard, on the other hand does not agree with this kind of reclassification.

She thinks that it should be rejected the legal bifurcation instead, and acknowledge the existence of a third legally relevant category, whose members could have some classes of rights.

This matters, in her opinion because even though people use the term "person" in different ways, it is possible to identify one properly widely accepted concept of a person that is morally and legally important, in which non-human animals do not fit

¹² The Claims of Animals and the Needs of Strangers: Two Cases of Imperfect Right CHRISTINE M. KORSGAARD

A person is a normatively self-governing being, thus a being who is able to control his or her choice and actions by utilizing standards of rightness and wrongness, and/or of virtuousness and badness. Only human beings and some kind of organizations, such as political states, correspond to that concept.

Rights require a kind of reciprocity of which animals are incapable.

Many people think of the sphere of rights as being in some distinctive way a sphere of reciprocity. Rights are something we agree reciprocally to each other. Saying that a being has right implies that he or she also has obligations, specifically obligations to respect the rights of others. David Hume claimed that non-human animals do not have something like this conception of reciprocity in mind. Hume makes the argument in order to show that the duties of justice are founded in considerations of selfinterest and utility. We assume people to be consistent with the duties of justice only under certain conditions, Hume argues, and those conditions are precisely the ones in which conforming to the duties of justice is useful to all involved. One of these conditions is a similar situation in terms of power between the parties to the agreement, which makes it in the interest of all parties to make and maintain the agreement. If one of the parties had enough power to completely control the other, it would not be in his or her interest to make any concessions to the other parties, and Hume affirms that therefore who is in the extreme superior position would not owe to the other anything. On these grounds, Hume maintains that we do not have duties of justice towards non-human animals: *“Were there a species of creatures intermingled with men, which, though rational, were possessed of such inferior strength, both of body and mind, that they were incapable of all resistance, and could never, upon the highest provocation, make us feel the effects of their resentment; the necessary consequence, I think, is that we should be bound by the laws of humanity to give gentle usage to these creatures, but should not, properly speaking, lie under any restraint of justice with regard to them, nor could they possess any right or property, exclusive of such arbitrary lords. Our intercourse with them could not be called society, which supposes a degree of equality; but absolute command on the one side, and servile obedience on the other. Whatever we covet, they must instantly resign: Our permission is the only tenure, by which they hold their possessions: Our compassion and kindness the only check, by which they curb our lawless will: And as no inconvenience ever results from the exercise of a power, so firmly established in nature, the restraints of justice and property, being totally useless, would never have place in so unequal a confederacy. This is plainly the situation of men, with regard to animals; and how far these may be said to possess reason, I leave it to others to determine”* (Hume 1975, pp. 190-91)¹³.

¹³ Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, 3.1

The function of rights is to protect autonomy, and animals are not autonomous.

A third and related problem, for some academics, is that they believe that the very nature of rights, in contrast to other kinds of moral claims, is to safeguard the liberty and autonomy of the beings who hold the rights. This is predominantly true of thinkers in the natural rights tradition, and of those who support the “will theory” rather than the “interest theory” of rights. The interest theory of rights maintains that rights exist to protect an individual’s important interests; whereas the will theory holds that rights define a field over which an individual has normative control. Immanuel Kant, who perfectly represents the natural rights tradition, contemplated rights as coercively enforceable prescriptions that are necessary to maintaining the liberty of everyone in an equal manner. “Force or coercion against free rational beings, he claimed, is wrong, excluding when force is used to protect someone’s freedom—to hinder a hindrance to freedom, as he put it” (Kant 1996, 6:231). John Rawls, considered rights in a liberal society as intended at securing to each citizen, as far as possible, the faculty to pursue his or her own conception of the good “that is, her own conception of what is worth doing and caring about in a human life” (Rawls 1971). According to Rawls’s views, rights guarantee that we are not constrained by restrictions that are merely grounded in other people’s conceptions of what is worth doing and caring about. We are only bounded by restrictions that arise from the requirement that everyone’s liberty and autonomous pursuit of his or her own conception of the good should be equally protected. But there is no point, according to this view, in securing liberty or autonomy to the other animals; non-human animals live according to their nature and instinct, they do not follow any moral value and their choices are not based on their personal conceptions of what is good.

The idea that animals have rights has counterintuitive implications about the actions of our ancestors and those now living in the developing world.

It is usual to think that our duties of benevolence or kindness, duties that we do not use to think of as grounded in rights, are relative to our own resources and necessities. We should not be required to give more than we can afford. That implies that these kind of duties can change with changing conditions. Humans think of their duties to animals as mere duties of kindness or humanity.

We no longer have the necessity to use real furs to keep from freezing. But our ancestors, especially in northern places, could hardly have done so.

We do not need to eat meat nowadays, when we can import vegetables from wherever they are growing, or keep them frozen. But this was not always true, now we can afford to be more “humane” than our ancestors.

A similar point can be made about people in the developing world. They often find themselves in a situation in which kindness to animals is a “luxury” that they cannot afford.

But it is difficult to think of a *right* as something that could be balanced against the costs to those who are supposed to respect it. Slave owners, for example, most of us, must think, were always wrong, regardless of their cultural and economic conditions. No one could ever have the right to treat another human being as property, and no one ever did. Our ancestors had the necessity to use furs, hunt, eat meat, and use animals for labor. That allowed the human species to evolve.

3.2 Moral Vegetarianism

Most of the earth population, eat meat, to provide it we raise non-human animals, we steal their lives, hurt, control, make suffer and finally kill billions of pigs, ducks, cattle and geese each year. Furthermore feed those animals need lot of resources and energy, so it is necessary to raise crops, consequently the process of deforestation continually increases, and so does the risk of water scarcity. In turn, this enormous quantity of animals that are raised, produce staggering amount of waste, those waste often directly pollute water sources and soil, and they produce shocking amounts of greenhouse gasses. A small part of the world's population, thinks that raising animals and eating them is wrong for numerous factors, and therefore have diets that exclude eating meat. According to omnivorism consume meat, other animal products, fungi, plants etc, is permissible, Moral Vegetarianism instead states that animals are among those things that "one may not eat"¹⁴. With the assumption that in times of abundance like our present, humans have the possibility to easily substitute meat in their diet, so we do not have the necessity to eat meat, this is the essential assumption necessary to explain why advocates of moral vegetarianism explains that it is wrong to produce meat, and is wrong to eat meat especially if the conditions in which animals are raised are taken in consideration. for example, chickens are used by humans in two ways: for their meat and for their eggs, there are currently standard techniques for the mass production of both products. A chicken producer can obtain from the incubators a load of 10,000, 50,000 or even more chicks per day. The chicks are placed in a long shed without windows, within this shed each factor is calculated to allow the chicks to grow as fast as possible and thus to maximize costs by reducing the necessary expenses. Food and water are automatically provided, the artificial lighting is adjusted to keep the chickens awake even at night, so that they eat more, after six weeks from the birth of the chicks the lights are kept constantly low in order to decrease the

¹⁴ Doggett, Tyler, "Moral Vegetarianism", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2018 Edition)

aggressive behavior of the chickens caused by the overcrowding. The chickens are killed after about seven weeks (The normal life cycle of a chicken is seven years) .

Within the sheds , chickens are forced to stay in a space of 450 cm , that is the normal surface of a sheet of paper , this space, so reduced , clearly causes stress in chickens that start ripping each other's feathers or killing other chickens. The loss of chickens also means loss of profit , in order to avoid this phenomenon then , the ends of the beaks of the chicks are cut , obviously without the chicks being under anesthesia effect . The atmosphere in which these animals are forced to live, is a big threat to health, in their seven weeks of life , their excrements are never cleaned up , the air then becomes full of bacteria , saturates and microorganisms , which has devastating effects on the birds' lungs. The laying hens are subjected to many of the treatments reserved to the chickens. As they are subjected to the cutting of the beak . The adult hens are placed in cages where they will spend their whole life, these cages are placed with an inclination of 20 percent so as to allow the eggs to roll more easily, this however makes it more difficult to comfortably hold on to the birds. Furthermore the nails of the chickens , without a solid soil that consume them , grow too much and can remain permanently entangled in the wires of the cages. Of all the animals that are commonly reared to be eaten, the pig is the smartest, the natural intelligence of the pig is even superior to that of the dog; in nature, the pig, builds stable social groups, are very active and build shelters. The intensive breeding do not allow these animals to follow these behavioral forms that are for them instinctive. Pigs in the modern industrial farms are deprived of any form of stimuli, live a life in the constant boredom and this is for them source of great stress that flows in aggressive attitudes, that usually are not of the tame nature of the pigs. To solve this problem, the breeders practice the amputation of the pigs' tails. Another problem for pigs, is that the floors where pigs are kept, are projected to facilitate the job of maintenance rather than to guarantee the comfort of the animals; this provokes serious lesions to the pigs' legs , the animal is usually butchered before serious deformities are formed .The pigs spend their whole life inside the sheds, without ever being able to see the sun's light . The principal advantage of the breeding in the cage is that the piglets can be weaned more quickly, this makes sow returns fertile after few days, two aspects of these procedures are quite alarming; first the stress caused to the piglets separated by their mother; premature separation of mother and child is cause of emotional suffering for both. The second worrisome aspect is that the sow is treated as a reproduction machine , if a normal citizen held confined some dogs in a cage for their whole life, he would be considered cruel, yet this procedure is normally approved when it comes with breeding animals. The sows are totally segregated during all of their life, and they are confined in cages that are so narrow that the sow are not able to turn. From the moral point of view, of all the forms of breeding practiced, the rearing of the calf is the most repugnant. The calf meat is meat of very young animals and therefore very tender. To keep it so tender, the farms keep the animals in extremely unnatural conditions ; the calves are separated from their mothers and kept in wooden boxes where they are bound with a chain to prevent them from turning inside the box, they are fed with totally liquid food , but without the necessary vitamins so as to keep the meat

completely pale, the calf is kept therefore totally anemic. The calves suffer terribly from the lack of the mother, furthermore, when in nature, they are very active and lively animals, in the farms are kept in very small cages, This causes restlessness, producers, in order to “solve”; this problem, they keep animals completely in the dark.

The interests of the animals are not taken into account at all, although it is clear how much suffering is caused by these practices, the only factor that is important is the profit of the breeders.

According to Moral Vegetarianism, Industrial animal farming is unacceptable, since we accept that animals are sentient beings, so that have the capacity to feel pleasure and pain, it is wrong that industrial farms do make animals suffer. Animal farming treats them as tools. Finally it has also to be considered that Industrial farming is one of the biggest source of pollution, and clearly, harming environment while producing food, causing suffering while there are readily available alternatives, is wrong.

CONCLUSION

Human animals, violate the fundamental moral principle of equal consideration of interest that should rule our relations with all the existing beings, and they violate it for futile purposes. Generation after generation, occidental thinkers have tried to defend human's right of behave in that way. Our attitude towards animals starts to develop when we are very young and it is dictated by the fact that we start eating meat very soon in our life, even before we are able to understand that what we are eating is a lifeless animal's body. At the same time, children show a natural love for animals, and our society push them to be loving with what are considered to be companion animals. Children's love is pushed to be addressed towards animals that are not those that humans use to eat. The importance of the habits and belief that children develop during their childhood is not unknown, indeed feminist movement was able to promote the development of a new kind of literature that is addressed to children; girls here, have a central and active role, a role that used to be reserved only to boys before. The difficulty relies into the fact that parents will be reluctant to let their children understand meat as lifeless animals because of the consequences that this information could have on their diet, furthermore, mass media do not inform audience about this subject, people tend to have the idea that animals used to produce meat live freely and happily in big farms. Even who is conscious of the fact that traditional farms have been substituted by big industries, have the idea that animals are treated with kindness, because otherwise government would never allow the traditional procedures that are used in meat industries. It is ignorance thus, the first source of defense of speciesism. Among the assumptions that make difficult addressing people interest to animals, there is the assumption that <<humans come before animals>> and that none of the problem that concern animals, could be

considered as a serious moral matter if compared to problems that concern humans ,this preconception is clearly a sign of speciesism . The importance of avoiding pain, does not decrease if we are talking about a subject that does not belong to our species ,it sounds absurd as it would sound absurd if someone thought that white people problems are more important of black people problems. Generally, we tend to ignore the abuse of living beings that is behind every dish we eat. Large societies and those who have to compete are clearly not interested in the harmony between plants, animals and nature, their activity is competitive and the methods they adopt are those that reduce costs and increase production, animals reared in such a way lead a miserable life from the moment of their birth to the one of their death, there is no reason to blame more producers than consumers, because the attitudes of producers and consumers are not fundamentally different , the author Ruth Harrison says, in this regard , that cruelty is recognized only when the profit ceases.¹⁵ Once speciesist prejudices have been put aside, it is clear that non-human animals oppression is one of the biggest moral matter of our society .The amount of non-human animals involved is enormous : every year, in United States of America , beyond 100 million of swine, sheep and cattle are subject to mistreatment and are used for meat production, the same happens for billion of chickens and at least 25 million of animals are used for experiments. If million of human were forced to undergo the kind of tests addressed to animals to assess the level of toxicity of the household products , it would surely be considered repugnant and morally unacceptable . It is often said about animals kept in cages for experiments or for being processed into meat, that the conditions in which they leave are not source of suffering for them , because they never lived in other conditions, but this is a wrong belief; animals feel the need to move, stretch out their limbs or wings , clean and turn , regardless of whether they have never had the possibility to live in conditions that allowed it. Animals that in natural conditions ,live in herds or in groups, suffer because they are isolated from other members of their species. Non-human animals are not humans, but on the other hand , they are not machines neither research tools.

People observe that modern conditions in modern farms , even if unpleasant, are not worse than those existing in nature, where animals are exposed to cold, to hunger, to predators; the implication would therefore be that we should not oppose breeding .The consideration that should be made in this case is that a life in freedom is certainly to be preferred, it is true that many wild animals die because of natural adverse conditions or because they are killed by predators , but on the other hand also farmed animals do not live longer than their normal life expectancy ,the continued availability of food on farms is not an unconditional advantage , since it deprives animals of their most fundamental natural activity, the search for food, the result is a life of extreme boredom.

Is often claimed that since non-human animals kill other non-human animals to eat , humans, then are justified to treat animals in the way they do. This analogy was overcome in 1785 when William Paley rebutted it by emphasizing how, while humans are able to live without killing, other animals have no choice

¹⁵ *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*, published by Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland, (2004).

if they want to survive¹⁶ It could be said that it is quite inconsistent on the part of men, that usually consider themselves superior to other animals use, if it seems to support their dietary preferences, an argument that implies that we should turn to other animals to receive inspiration and moral teaching. The point is, of course, that non-human animals are not able to consider other alternatives or to reflect morally on the problem of whether it is right to kill for food , non-human animals can not be blamed for what they do .

Speciesism is an attitude that occurs in every aspect of our relationship with animals .On a purely practical level it is possible to affirm that killing animals for food leads us to think of them as objects that we can use with indifference for our nonessential purposes , as long as we continue to think in this way about animals we will not succeed in changing the practices that lead to the mistreatment of animals.Peter singer

“The ethical principle on which the human equality is based on , requires us to extend equal consideration also to animals” (Singer)

“Animals are not able to demand their own release, or to protest against their condition with votes, demonstrations and boycotts. Humans have the power to continue to oppress other species forever, or until they render this planet unfit for life. Will our tyranny continue, demonstrating that morality has no weight when it conflicts with selfishness, as the most cynical among poets and philosophers have always advocated? Either we will rise to the challenge and demonstrate our capacity for genuine selflessness by putting an end to the ruthless exploitation of species in our power, not because we are forced to do so by rebels or terrorists, But why do we recognize that our position is morally indefensible?

The way we answer this question depends on how each of us responds to it individually.” (Singer 2009)¹⁷

1 Lawick-Goodall, George Schaller e Ireanaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt

¹⁷ *Animal liberation A New Ethics for our Treatment of Animals*, New York Review/Random House, New York, 1975

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SUMMARY

La storia del pensiero occidentale è stata scandita da una radicata forma di antropocentrismo.

L'antropocentrismo occidentale, in particolare, è espresso dall'idea che esiste una radicale differenza ontologica tra gli esseri umani e tutti gli altri esseri viventi. La radicata presenza dell'antropocentrismo in tutti gli aspetti della nostra società, spiega perfettamente perché le pratiche utilizzate dagli esseri umani per sfruttare gli animali e ricavarne profitto, seppur oggettivamente ripugnanti, siano comunemente accettate e giustificate. Nonostante ciò, il trattamento che gli esseri umani riservano agli animali non umani, sta diventando con il tempo una questione etica molto importante, in particolare la domanda sembra essere: Quali sono i requisiti che un essere vivente deve necessariamente possedere affinché il principio di giustizia possa essere applicato? Alcuni affermano che gli esseri umani siano totalmente diversi dal resto del mondo naturale, e che quindi questo implichi che la considerazione morale non è né necessaria né giustificata, quando si parla di animali non umani, è perciò possibile acconsentire a tutte le pratiche umane che implicano sofferenza, morte e dolore degli animali non umani. In contrasto con questa concezione, un numero crescente di intellettuali affermano che le differenze tra umani e animali non umani non siano assolutamente una ragione moralmente valida per poter privare di qualsiasi tipo di considerazione morale gli animali non umani.

Se questo fosse vero, molte delle nostre abitudini sarebbero fonte di terribili errori etici basati sulla passiva accettazione dello Specismo. Noi tolleriamo infatti trattamenti crudeli che non accetteremmo mai se i soggetti coinvolti fossero membri della nostra specie. Secondo la teoria dello Specismo, solo gli esseri umani sono degni di essere moralmente considerati. Essere specisti significa credere che un membro di una specie sia superiore e degno di maggiore considerazione morale rispetto ad un membro appartenente ad un'altra specie, anche nel caso in cui gli interessi di entrambi gli individui fossero analoghi. Lo Specismo umano considera gli animali umani come assolutamente superiori a tutti gli altri, questa visione implica l'esclusione di tutti gli animali non umani dalla sfera dei diritti, libertà e protezioni che sono generalmente attribuite agli uomini.

Tipico degli specisti è la convinzione che gli uomini siano giustificati a sfruttare le altre specie animali poiché gli esseri umani hanno il dovere morale di difendere la loro specie. L'idea che gli animali non umani abbiano dei diritti che dovrebbero essere loro garantiti all'interno delle comunità umane, inizia a diffondersi alla fine del XVII secolo. Richard Ryder al contrario degli specisti, afferma che esiste una forte emergenza di portare alla luce il terribile errore morale che caratterizza la società antropocentrica, ovvero il chiaro rifiuto di trattare gli esseri viventi non appartenenti alla specie umana in maniera dignitosa. Le teorie anti speciste affermano che, le abilità di sentire, interagire con l'ambiente esterno, manifestare i propri bisogni, avere relazioni sociali ecc. non sono prerogative della razza umana. L'attribuzione di queste capacità agli esseri viventi che non appartengono alla razza umana implicherebbe un grande cambiamento circa i diritti

morali che dovrebbero essere loro riconosciuti. Chiaramente, se fosse messo da parte lo Specismo , una trasformazione essenziale nella relazione tra umani e animali non umani sarebbe necessaria .

Effettivamente, appartenere ad una specie è una caratteristica che non è moralmente rilevante, essendo una caratteristica moralmente irrilevante, non può essere usata come base di una teoria che afferma che gli esseri umani meritano una tipologia di considerazione morale che non è invece dovuta agli animali non umani.

Alla base dello Specismo c'è la convinzione che gli esseri umani siano incondizionatamente ed essenzialmente diversi dagli altri animali che popolano il nostro pianeta. Lo specismo umano afferma che gli esseri umani siano superiori a tutti gli altri animali in molti modi ; gli uomini hanno abilità speciali che gli animali non umani non posseggono, ed è proprio sulle basi di queste abilità che, secondo lo specismo ,è possibile affermare che gli uomini sono in possesso di uno stato morale mentre gli animali invece, mancano delle abilità necessarie per poterne avere uno. Alcune delle competenze, considerate prerogative dell'uomo sono: pensare in maniera astratta, stabilire legami familiari, usare il linguaggio, imparare altre lingue, risolvere problemi sociali, iniziare guerre, esprimere emozioni. Ciò nonostante, molti intellettuali e risultati di esperimenti che coinvolgono animali, confermano che molte delle capacità che si pensa siano uniche degli esseri umani, possono invece essere ritrovate anche negli animali. Molte specie di animali non umani, stabiliscono legami che durano a lungo, tutti gli animali che vivono in gruppi socialmente articolati, devono affrontare molti problemi che inevitabilmente si presentano all'interno di questi gruppi, ed in più gli animali non umani negoziano il loro ambiente sociale essendo emozionalmente attenti e attaccati agli altri individui che appartengono al loro gruppo. Jane Goodall, ad esempio è un'antropologa e una primatologa, ha passato 56 anni studiando gli scimpanzé selvatici, e come essi sviluppano legami sociali e familiari. Dai suoi studi si evince che gli scimpanzé sono più simili agli uomini di quanto si possa pensare, essi sono capaci di stabilire legami molto forti, di essere gentili ed affettuosi, e riescono ad esprimere le emozioni in maniera quasi analoga a quella umana. La visione antropocentrica che afferma che solo gli uomini hanno capacità mentali sufficientemente complesse che permettono articolate forme di consapevolezza, è scientificamente rinnegata. La nostra visione degli animali è fortemente influenzata da fattori politici, sociali e implicazioni ambientali. Un altro importante aspetto utilizzato dagli specisti per giustificare la supremazia umana, è il concetto di persona. Il concetto di persona non è universale, ma viene generalmente riconosciuta come persona, un essere che è moralmente responsabile delle sue azioni, e che quindi riesce a distinguere il bene dal male, solo chi ne è capace avrebbe diritto a considerazione morale. Anche se l'intera umanità è ritenuta meritevole di diritti morali, non tutta la popolazione umana rientra nel concetto di persona: gli infanti, i disabili o le persone affette da Alzheimer, ad esempio, non sarebbero considerati come persone. Se dovessimo realmente accettare l'idea che solo chi è una "persona" abbia uno status morale, allora un'abbondante parte della popolazione umana non avrebbe alcun diritto morale.

È impossibile non riconoscere che tra gli stessi esseri umani siano presenti tante differenze. Gli uomini, non hanno le stesse caratteristiche fisiche, non hanno gli stessi talenti, o abilità. Tutti noi possediamo diverse capacità morali, diverse abilità intellettuali, svariati livelli di relazioni con altri esseri umani, differenti capacità comunicative, e diverse possibilità di provare dolore o piacere. Se quindi la richiesta di uguaglianza nel trattamento ricevuto, fosse davvero basata su una concreta uguaglianza tra gli esseri umani, allora essa non avrebbe ragione di esistere. Da un punto di vista logico, non c'è ragione che permetta di poter affermare che differenti capacità tra due individui possano giustificare una considerazione morale diversa, soprattutto se gli interessi presi in considerazione risultano essere analoghi. Se avere un livello di intelligenza superiore non autorizza un uomo ad utilizzare come strumento un altro essere umano che possiede capacità minori, allora lo stesso vale per gli animali non umani, lo Specismo è una tipologia di discriminazione della stessa natura di sessismo e razzismo, è perciò infondata.

La prima comparsa di un esplicito riferimento ai diritti degli animali risale comunemente al 1792, anno in cui Mary Wollstonecraft, scrive *A vindication of the rights of Woman*, in cui l'autrice analizza quali sono le ragioni per le quali è necessario che alle donne siano riconosciuti i loro diritti. Nello stesso anno il filosofo Thomas Taylor produce, in risposta, un breve testo nel quale in maniera molto esplicita deride l'idea dei diritti garantiti alle donne, scrivendo *A vindication of the rights of brutes*, nel quale afferma che spingersi a riconoscere i diritti delle donne costringerebbe poi a riconoscere anche i diritti delle bestie poiché se le ragioni esposte da Wollstonecraft fossero riconosciute come vere, non ci sarebbe motivo per negare gli stessi diritti alle bestie. Esattamente cento anni dopo la pubblicazione del saggio di Wollstonecraft, Henry Salt, filosofo inglese compone 1892, il volume *Animal's Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, in esso egli rivendica l'esistenza dei diritti degli animali: "Gli animali hanno diritti e tali diritti consistono nella limitata libertà di vivere una vita naturale" (Salt). Intorno alla metà degli anni settanta del Novecento, il tema dei diritti degli animali diventa una questione molto importante, in questo panorama nascono movimenti animalisti, in gran parte, ispirati dall'opera di Peter Singer *Animal Liberation* del 1975.

L'idea che gli animali abbiano dei diritti sembra preoccupare molti a causa delle sue implicazioni, se davvero fossero riconosciuti i diritti di vita, integrità fisica, e libertà agli animali, allora tutte le nostre attività che inevitabilmente violano i diritti degli animali dovrebbero cessare. Peter Singer, è un filosofo australiano, e nel suo libro *Animal Liberation*, ha identificato la capacità di soffrire come la caratteristica vitale che attribuisce ad un essere vivente il diritto di avere considerazione morale. Secondo Singer, ciò che realmente importa è la natura dell'interesse dell'essere vivente in questione: un interesse può essere cruciale, importante, e rimpiazzabile, quando si crea un conflitto di interessi, gli interessi cruciali, chiaramente, dovranno prevalere sugli interessi importanti, e gli interessi di natura importante dovranno prevalere sugli

interessi rimpiazzabili. Gli animali hanno un chiaro interesse a continuare a vivere, il quale è un interesse cruciale, gli uomini hanno un interesse a mangiare carne animale, avendo altre fonti di cibo disponibili, quello degli esseri umani risulta essere un interesse facilmente rimpiazzabile, non c'è quindi nessuna giustificazione moralmente valida che permette ad un uomo di non rispettare un interesse cruciale per soddisfare un interesse di natura minore.

Un'altra teoria molto interessante è offerta dal filosofo Americano Tom Regan , autore di molti libri che hanno ispirato movimenti animalisti. Dalle sue opere è possibile evincere che dal suo punto di vista, gli animali non umani, così come gli umani stessi sono quelli che lui chiama "soggetti di una vita". Se si approva l'idea di dare valore alla vita di un essere umano a prescindere dalle sue capacità intellettive e il suo grado di razionalità, allora dare un valore simile alla vita degli animali non-umani è inevitabile.

Secondo l'autore, solo gli individui con valore intrinseco dovrebbero avere dei diritti, ad avere un valore intrinseco sono i soggetti-di-vita i quali sono agenti autocoscienti, con desideri e bisogni. Regan afferma che essendo gli animali, soggetti di una vita , devono godere del diritto alla vita, all'integrità fisica, e alla libertà. Di conseguenza il diritto di cui godono gli esseri umani, di non essere trattati come risorse, deve essere esteso agli animali. Da un punto di vista morale, coloro che hanno minori capacità intellettuali non vivono per servire gli interessi di coloro che sono dotati di maggiori capacità intellettuali. Ognuno di noi ha lo stesso valore, in quanto ognuno di noi è "qualcuno" e "qualcosa ", ognuno di noi è il soggetto di una vita e non una vita senza soggetto.

Il nostro atteggiamento nei confronti degli animali inizia a svilupparsi quando siamo molto giovani, ed è determinato dal fatto che iniziamo ad introdurre carne nella nostra dieta in tenera età; quindi prima che le nostre capacità intellettive ci permettano di capire che ciò che mangiamo non è altro che il corpo di un animale senza vita. Allo stesso tempo, i bambini dimostrano di avere un'inclinazione naturale per l'amore verso gli animali, la società d'altra parte li spinge ad essere amorevoli con quelli che sono considerati animali da compagnia, ma non con gli animali che invece sono comunemente allevati per poi essere mangiati. L'importanza delle abitudini e dei valori che i bambini sviluppano durante la loro infanzia è risaputa. La rilevanza di evitare sofferenza non diminuisce se gli esseri in questione non appartengono alla specie umana. Generalmente tendiamo ad ignorare l'abuso e la sofferenza che c'è dietro i nostri piatti. Le grandi industrie, certamente non sono interessate all'armonia tra esseri umani e animali, la loro attività è competitiva ed è sempre alla ricerca di modi per ridurre i costi e aumentare il profitto, senza tenere in conto, ovviamente, gli interessi degli animali, i quali conducono una vita miserabile dal momento della loro nascita fino a quello della macellazione. Ovviamente non c'è ragione di incolpare più i produttori dei consumatori. Una volta che i pregiudizi specisti verranno messi da parte, sarà chiaro che la tirannia umana sugli animali è una questione etica davvero importante. Il numero di animali coinvolti nelle industrie di allevamento è esorbitante, se fossero esseri umani ad essere derubati della propria vita e sottoposti ad una quantità simile di sofferenza, la questione sarebbe considerata moralmente inaccettabile. Gli animali non umani, non sono

umani, questo è un dato di fatto, esistono numerose differenze che ci dividono, ma gli animali non sono di certo macchine e neppure strumenti di ricerca. Spesso si afferma che poiché gli animali non umani uccidono altri animali per cibarsi, allora noi uomini siamo giustificati ad ucciderli, questa analogia però, è stata rinnegata nel 1785 quando William Paley mostrò come, mentre gli uomini sono capaci di vivere anche senza uccidere, altri animali non hanno scelta se vogliono sopravvivere, e soprattutto è piuttosto incoerente da parte degli umani, che si considerano sempre superiori al resto degli animali, utilizzare una teoria che implichi ricevere ispirazione e insegnamenti morali da altre specie. Il punto è che ovviamente gli animali non umani non sono capaci di considerare altre alternative o di riflettere moralmente sulla questione, gli animali non umani non possono quindi essere incolpati per le loro azioni. Lo Specismo è un atteggiamento che ricorre in ogni aspetto all'interno delle nostre relazioni con gli animali. A livello puramente pratico, uccidere animali per cibo, con altre fonti di cibo disponibili, è pensare a loro come oggetti che possiamo utilizzare con indifferenza per scopi non essenziali, e finché questo atteggiamento non cambierà, le nostre pratiche non potranno mai cambiare.