

Are we morally justified to keep animals in zoos?

Animal-ethics versus nature-ethics

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Gorilla Harambe in Cincinnati zoo

Ethics?

Ethiek

What the world is like (empirical) Facts

↓

How we should deal with that world (normative) Reflection

Ethics

Ethics is a *systematic reflection* on morality

Morality: "The totality of norms and values that a person (or group) regard as directive for action and that are deemed universalisable and important by this person (or group)."

Moral judgment formation

Intuitions

- First impression

Based on p.e.

- what you have learned during your upbringing
- culture
- already accepted moral judgments
- emotions



Important to take seriously, but not ethics yet. Emotions need to be related to principles and facts.



Facts

- Often you only 'see' the facts that fit your intuition
- Are the 'facts' correct?
- Always an interpretation of what you think you are seeing




Are the photo's doctored?

Will they die?

Does it lead to welfare problems?



Facts are not 'neutral'

- Facts are interpretations of observations
- If an animal in captivity procreates (observation) does this mean that the animal's welfare is met (interpretation)?
- If research shows that consumers are not prepared to pay more for 'animal friendly meat'(observations) does this mean that they don't care about animal welfare (interpretation)?




Principles

- Based on moral theories
- Generally accepted
- Rational:
 - logical
 - consistent

Principles can require:

- different interpretation of facts
- looking for additional facts
- adjustment of intuitions (works both ways, but careful: counterintuitive does not mean wrong)




Some General Ethical Principles



- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Freedom of choice
- Justice
- Right to information



Who, what & why?

Goal	How	Who counts	Theory
We need to strive for happiness	By aggregating happiness of all involved	Each being that can experience pain/ pleasure	Utilitarianism
Morality is part of our rationality	By applying a rationality demand to each action (CI)	Autonomous rational persons	Kantianism
The good life/ society	By following virtues	Those who virtuous persons can emphasise with	Virtue ethics
Protection of vulnerable groups	Relations determine responsibilities	Each being that can experience pain/ pleasure	Relational ethics

Animals have interests in so far they are sentient. Equal interests should be treated equally

Animals have inherent value and therefore rights in so far they are subjects-of-a-life

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Marginal cases argument

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RACISM = SPECIESISM = SEXISM

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From the individual to the collective

- **Ecocentrists** criticize animal ethicists: no distinction is made between rare and common animal species (killing one whale or 20 chickens...)
- Focus on individuals too limited

The predator problem

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SOCIAL SYSTEMS VS. INDIVIDUAL FITNESS

Study.com

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Ecocentrism

- Emphasis on ecological relations and processes
- Leopold: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community, it is wrong when it tends otherwise"

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Animal ethicists criticism of ecocentrism



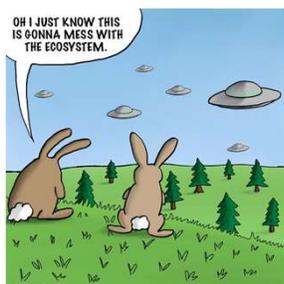
Ecofascism



2 main practical conflicts:
1) Population control



2) Preservation of biodiversity: captive breeding



Arguments against species preservation in zoos:

- 1) Welfare problems
- 2) Wild animals have an interest in liberty
- 3) Dilemmas due to natural behaviour

Arguments in favour:

- 1) Species preservation more important than individual interests
- 2) Education & research



Welfare problems



- Space restrictions & boredom
 - Inability to carry out natural behaviour
 - Stress from exposure to visitors
 - Disturbed group dynamics
- Stereotypical behaviour
 - Health problems
 - Self-harm
 - Depression



How to deal with surplus animals?
Zoothenasia
Allowing for natural behaviour?



Disagreement between animal ethicists

- What if you could keep animals in captivity without causing welfare problems? Is it still problematic?



Do animals have an interest in liberty as such? Is freedom an instrumental or also an intrinsic interest for animals?



Cochrane's argument

- Freedom is an instrumental interest for animals in so far as it facilitates "other goods, such as the avoidance of suffering"
- Most human beings also have an intrinsic interest in freedom, because they have a stake in being free from control and being the author of their own lives
- For this you need to possess autonomy
- and be able to reflect on your own desires

Animal Rights Without Liberation



Alasdair Cochrane



AN ABILITY TO DISTINGUISH among individuals was demonstrated in an experiment involving the hiding of food. The authors created "knower" birds (such as the one at bottom in the first frame), who could observe the location of a cache made by another bird, and "nonknowers," who could not see the cache location.

When the knower and nonknower were put into the caching area (second frame), the cache maker recognized the knower and attributed knowledge to him, guarding against his encroachment, while ignoring the nonknowers, even when he got close to the hidden food. (In the actual experiment, the knower and nonknower were put into the caching area separately, and colored leg bands were not used; they have been added to help the reader distinguish the birds.)

Are they the authors of their own lives?



Autonomy comes in degrees

- It seems likely that animals have an interest in making certain decisions for themselves, eg. what conspecifics to mate with
- Even though they may not be able to foresee the implications of larger decisions, for example about their far future.
- Perhaps the distinction between instrumental and intrinsic interest is not as strict as Cochrane suggests.
- Many animals are able to frame their own conception of the good life:
- They pursue certain ends, shape their own lives, adapt to changing circumstances, make choices, and try to improve their environment, not only on their own but also by means of collective action (Gruen 2011, 150)



Related argument: some animals are persons

April 2015: For the first time in world history a judge recognizes 2 chimpanzees as legal persons

- Leo and Hercules
- Non-human Rights Project
- Steven Wise
- In court of appeals overturned
- Liberated after all (sanctuary)



Personhood status

- Distinction between legal and moral rights
- What is the moral basis for attributing personhood to animals?
- What does it mean in practice?
 - Right to liberty?
 - Right to life?
 - Right not to be used?



Persons

- According to Cochrane *some* animals might have an intrinsic interest in liberty, because they are autonomous
- Persons not necessarily all and only human beings
- The Great Ape Project (Singer, Cavalieri): great apes "are the closest relatives of our species" and these nonhumans "have mental capacities and an emotional life sufficient to justify inclusion within the community of equals."



Personhood

- The term persons was historically reserved for rights bearers, so slaves were not persons
- Nowadays it refers to **beings with complex consciousness**: self-awareness over time, rationality, sociability, autonomy
- Problem: self-awareness is not an all or nothing trait
- Comes in degrees
- In a sense all animals capable of purposive action are self-aware and social animals have sociability
- Not enough to have just one of these traits, but do not need to have all of them



What animals considered persons?



Examples of very complex consciousness

- Crows with Theory of Mind?
- Dogs that can distinguish words rather apart from intonation
- Dolphins have conversations
- Elephants have very long memory
- Even fish who cooperate with other species



The education-argument



What do people learn?
 What attitude does it engender?
 How wild are the animals?



Arguments for zoos: captivity for conservation

- Many zoos are changing into centers for conservation
- Difference between species conservation in situ and ex situ is blurring
- Sixth mass extinction of species
- Many wild populations can no longer manage on their own because of habitat fragmentation
- Even though many attempts to breed animals in captivity and release them fail, there are some success stories



Question for discussion:

1) What criteria should a zoo have to meet in order to justify animal captivity?

B. Bovenkerk & J. Keulartz, 2018, 'Animal Captivity' in *Encyclopedia of Animal Cognition and Behaviour*. Springer

"They should specialize in threatened species, focus on smaller animals, innovate their design to overcome space problems, provide enrichment, practice pre-release training, and broaden their conservation and education role".