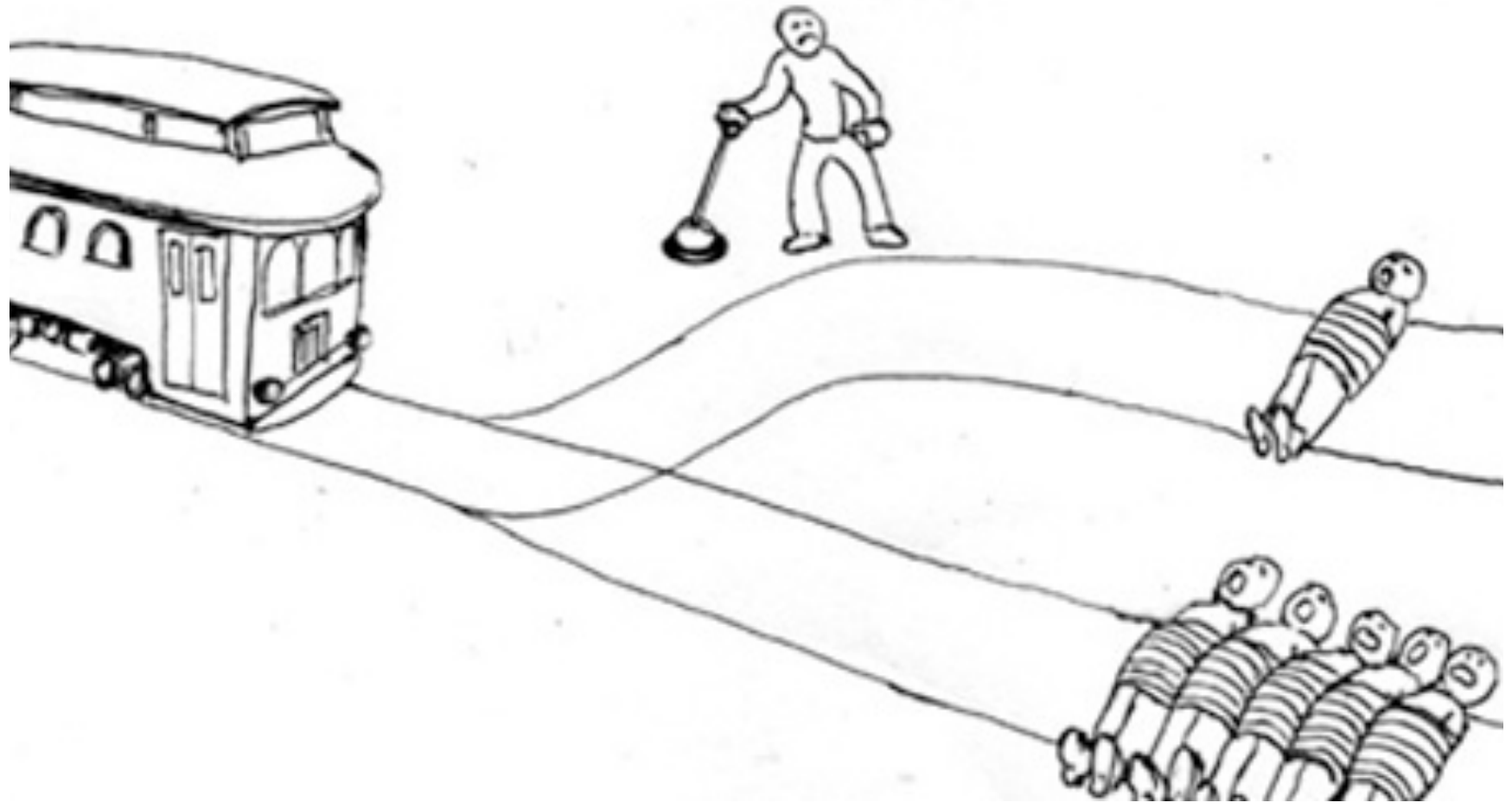
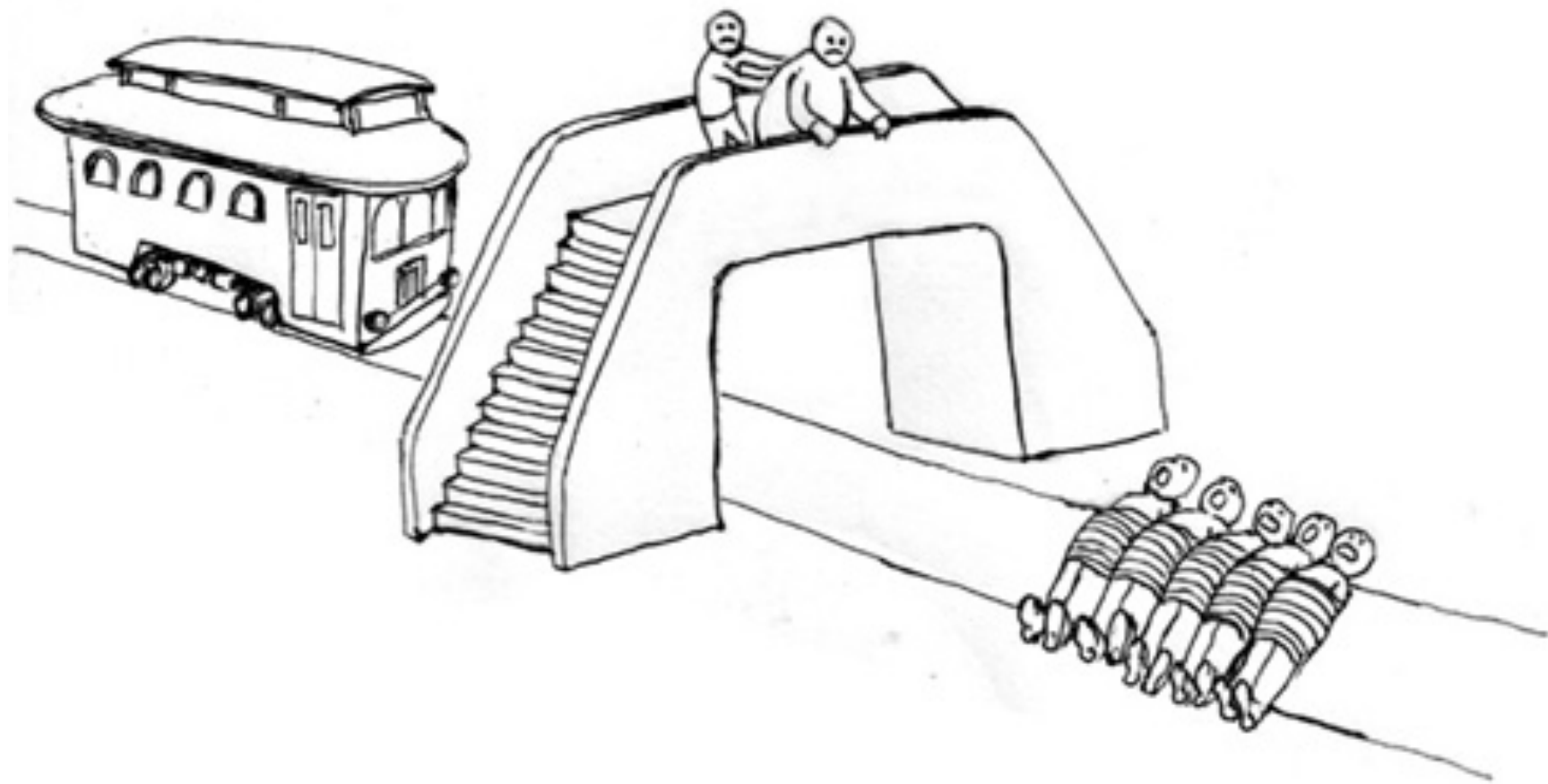


MNSES

Ethical Theories, Environmental  
Ethics, and Animal Rights

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# Three branches of ethics

- Metaethics
- Normative ethics
- Applied ethics

# Metaethics

- The study of moral concepts and language
- Is morality subjective or objective?
- Is moral knowledge possible, and if so how?
- Do moral facts exist? If so, what kind of facts?

# The sceptic

- "Ethics is a matter of taste" ("Beauty is in the eye of the beholder")
- "What's right for you isn't right for me"
- "Morality is a fiction"
- "Morality is relative"
- "Moral progress is impossible"

# Normative ethics

- What actions are right and wrong from a moral point of view?
- How can we justify moral claims?
- What values are important?
- How should we live?

# Ethical Theories

- Consequentialism
- Deontology
- Virtue ethics



# Applied ethics

- **Normative ethics applied to:**
- Environmental ethics
- Animal ethics
- Bioethics
- Climate ethics
- Military ethics
- Computer ethics
- Research ethics etc....

# Consequentialism

- Consequentialism: we ought to do whatever maximizes the good or valuable. It doesn't matter what kind of thing we do.
- According to this view whether or not an action is right or wrong depends *solely* on the consequences of that action.

# Consequences for whom?

*Just for myself?*

For everyone, *except* myself?

For all *humans*?

Standard answer:

- an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favorable than unfavorable *to everyone able benefit from what is valuable (eg. Pleasure, well-being) including the agent.*

# What are good consequences?

- Consequentialism *starts* with an account of what is *valuable*: (every kind of happiness, some kind of happiness , justice)
- An action is morally right only if it maximizes what is valuable.
- Consequentialist theories can look very different depending on their account of value

# Utilitarianism

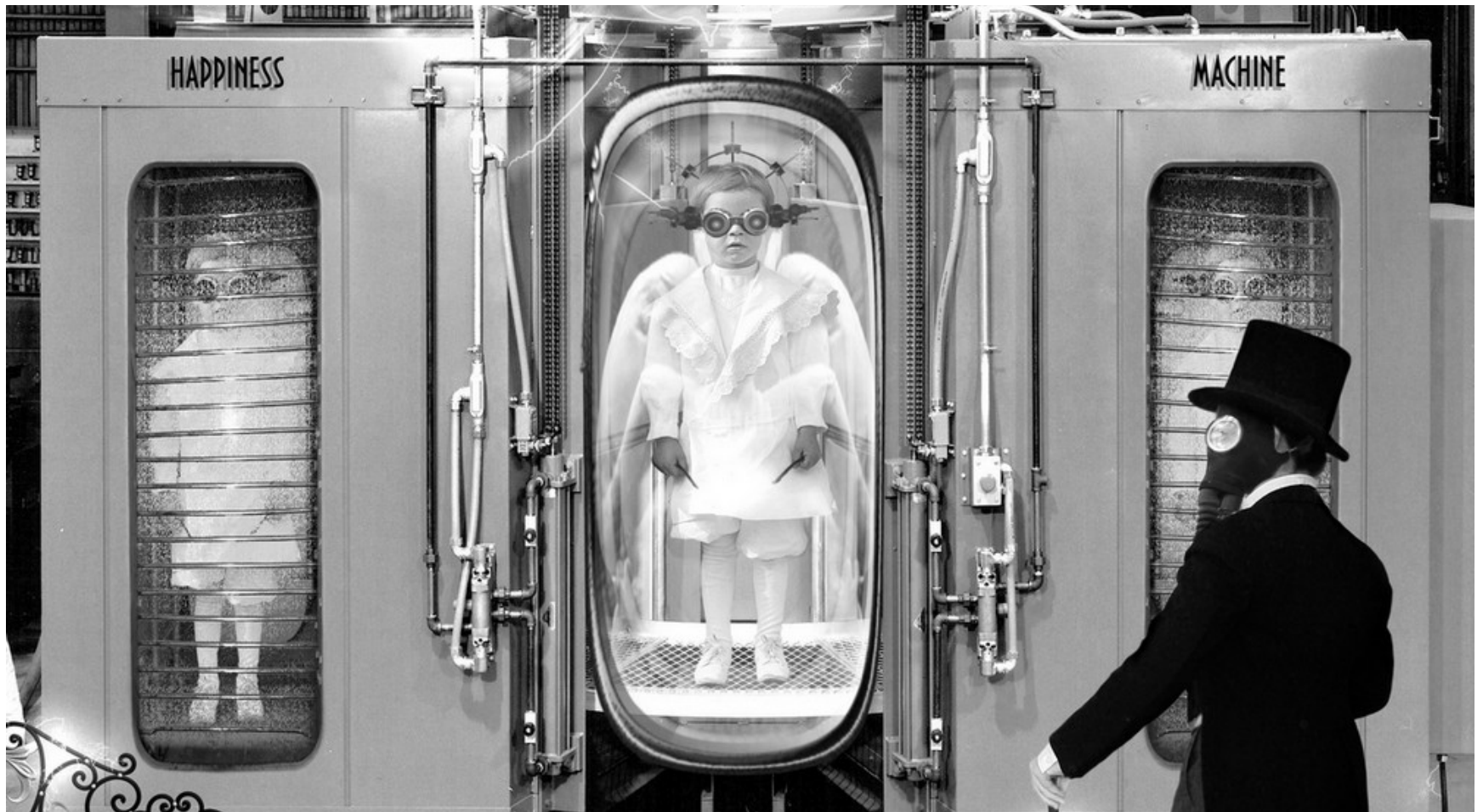
- Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialism, with a *specific account of value*.
- Classic Utilitarianism endorses *Hedonism*: only *pleasure* is intrinsically good and *pain* intrinsically bad. Thus, we should maximize pleasure and prevent pain.
- Hedonists often take pleasure in a very broad sense, including physical pleasure, happiness, contentment & well-being.
- On this account, other goods such as friendship, knowledge, freedom, health, honesty are *instrumental goods*: they only valuable because of the *pleasure* we derive from them.

Are all pleasures valuable?



- Perhaps some *kinds of happiness or pleasures* are better than others
- Intellectual pleasures, finishing a project, gaining insight are better than base pleasures
- “It is better to be a dissatisfied Socrates than a satisfied fool” John Stuart Mill

# The experience machine!





# The Experience Machine:

- Imagine that I have a machine that I could plug you into for the rest of your life. This machine would give you experiences of whatever kind you thought *most pleasant, most valuable or enjoyable* (writing a great novel, travelling around the world, having a successful pop-star career, bringing about world peace, etc.). You would not know you were on the machine, and there is no worry about its breaking down or whatever.
- Would you plug yourself into it? [Yes/No. Why?]

# Two versions of consequentialism

- **Act (direct) consequentialism:** An action is morally right if that action leads directly to the best consequences
- The act consequentialist decision procedure:
  - on each occasion the agent should decide what to do by calculating what act will produce the most good.

# Act consequentialism: Too permissive?

- Transplant [Foot 1966, Thomson 1976]:
- Imagine that each of five patients in a hospital will die without an organ transplant. The patient in Room 1 needs a heart, the patient in Room 2 needs a liver, the patient in Room 3 needs a kidney, and so on. The person in Room 6 is in the hospital for routine tests. Luckily (for them, not for him!), his tissue is compatible with the other five patients, and a specialist doctor is available to transplant his organs into the other five. This operation would save their lives, while killing the “donor”. There is no other way to save any of the other five patients. The organ recipients will emerge healthy. The source of the organs will remain secret. The doctor won't be caught or punished for cutting up the “donor”. The doctor knows all of this to a high degree of probability.
- Is it morally right for the doctor to kill the patient in Room 6 to save five other patients?

# Or too demanding?

- If act- consequentialism is true:
- What are you morally allowed to spend money on?
- What are you morally allowed to spend your time on?

# Or counterproductive?

- The act consequentialist decision procedure:
  - on each occasion the agent should decide what to do by calculating what act will produce the most good.
- It is very difficult and time-consuming to figure out what the best consequences of any given action are.
- The act consequentialist decision procedure might not lead to the best consequences!

# Rule consequentialism

- Rule (indirect) consequentialism: An action is morally right if it is based on the *rule* that would lead to the best consequences if it was followed.

The rule consequentialist action procedure:

On each occasion, the agent should decide what to do by applying rules, whose acceptance would produce the most good.

E.g. "Don't lie", Don't harm others etc.

# Problem for rule-consequentialism

- **Collapse into act- consequentialism?**
- Don't steal, lie, murder, etc *except where it leads to best consequences*
  
- **Incoherence?**
- Should we follow a general rule, even if it would lead to better consequences if we break it?

# Deontology

- **Non-consequentialism:** says that some kinds of action (such as killing or torturing the innocent) are wrong in themselves (and should not be done), and not just wrong because they have bad consequences.
- **Deontology:** is an ethical theory that endorses Non-Consequentialism. Whether or not an action is right or wrong does not depend or only depends partially on the consequences of that action (an action might be right or wrong in itself). This means that according to deontology, an act can be considered right even if it produces bad consequences.



- Individuals have rights
- These rights correspond to duties

# Deontological constraints

- A duty not harm *anyone*.
- A duty not to lie, not to kill innocent people, torture.
- These prohibition constrain what we can do to any person (not only those close to use), independent of the results.
- Some acts are right or wrong in themselves.
- Some acts are ruled out in advance

# How stringent are these constraints?

- Kant (Kantian Deontology): absolute or exceptionless  
– we should not lie or kill no matter what
- Ross (Rossian Deontology): pro tanto – we should not lie or kill unless there are very good reasons to do so (overriding reasons).

# Agent neutral vs Agent relative

- Consequentialism is typically an *agent-neutral* theory
- Each of us have a reason to promote *everybody's* good equally
- Deontology is typically an *agent-relative* theory.
- Not only are we permitted to do more for those close to us, but we are often *required* to put their interest first.

- You are out for a swim when you discover two children, unknown to you, screaming for help.
- In the opposite direction you also discover that your own child is screaming for help.
- You only have time to swim in one direction.

# options

- Am I permitted to care more about my own welfare than about the welfare of others?
- Act utilitarianism says *no*: we have impersonal reasons to try to fix the world (maximise the good)
- Deontology typically says *yes*: I have personal reasons to care more about myself and my family than about others (strangers).

# Supererogation

- When have I done *enough* by way of helping others?
- Act consequentialism : you will never come that far; there is no point at which you are permitted (or have the option) to do no more. (Remember the demandingness objection)
- This leaves out *supererogation* (acting beyond duty)
- Deontology: there comes a point, perhaps hard to determine, at which you have an option not to do more. But if you make an extra sacrifice, we admire and praise you for it – it is supererogatory.

# Positive and negative duties

- Positive duties: duties to help other people
- Negative duties: Duties not harm other people
- Deontology typically says take our negative duties to more strict.
- Doing vs. Allowing.



# Deontology and intention

- For deontology the *intention* of the agent can typically help determine whether an act is permissible or not.
- Even if two actions have exactly the same consequences, one might be permissible and one impermissible depending on the intention.

# Doctrine of double effect

- The doctrine of double effect: It is never permissible to *intend* harm, but harm can sometimes be permissible as a *foreseen* side effect of an action that is necessary to achieve some proportionate good
- Consider examples from war: we will often foresee that a military attack will lead to collateral damage. But collateral damage is not what we intend to achieve with the attack.

- **Tactical bomber:** A bomber drops a bomb on a munitions factory in order to secure his side a significant military advantage. The bomber knows that fifty non-combatants in a nearby children's hospital will be killed as side-effect of the blast.
- **Terror bomber:** A bomber drops a bomb on a children's hospital in order to kill fifty non-combatant. This will terrorise the local munitions workers into quitting their jobs, thus securing a significant military advantage.

# Animal Ethics

- Are animals part of the moral community?

In which sense? Which ones? On what conditions?

- Another way of phrasing the question: what is the *moral status* of animals?

**Moral status:** the status a being has if we as moral agents have direct moral duties with regard to it. Those include: Negative duties not to harm. Positive duties to promote well-being.

# A bit of history

- Aristotle (384-322 b.c.): there is a hierarchy in nature, animals lack rational capacity that humans have, their function is to serve humans.
- Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274): we have moral duties only towards rational creatures, i.e. humans
- Descartes (1596-1650): animals are not conscious, they are automata, while humans are conscious
- Kant (1724-1804): only human beings have autonomy and 'personhood' - we have moral duties towards *persons*, not animals. We should not harm animals because this may harm *us* as moral subjects – indirect duties towards humanity to refrain from being cruel.

# Morally relevant differences

- If we are to treat animals different than humans, we need find *morally relevant* differences between humans and animals
- What are the candidates?

- Human exceptionalism:

developing family ties, solving social problems, expressing emotions, language, abstract thinking

Problem: none of these activities is uncontroversially unique to humans.

- Personhood and rational capacity:

Derived from Kantian ethics. Traditionally places animals outside the moral community. Carruthers (1992): animals cannot enter moral contract, no direct moral duties towards them.

But see Korsgaard (2004): animals share some natural capacities (e.g. the desire to avoid pain) with humans that lead to moral demands similar to those that persons make to each other

# The Argument from Marginal Cases:

- (1) In order to conclude that all and only human beings (and not animals) deserve a full and equal moral status there must be some property  $P$  that all and only human beings have that can ground such a claim.
- (2) Any  $P$  that only human beings have is a property that (some) human beings lack (marginal cases).
- (3) Any  $P$  that all human beings have is a property that (most) animals have as well.
- (4) Therefore, there is no way to defend the claim that all and only human beings deserve a full and equal moral status.

This implies that the interests of animals affected by our actions count morally, and that their interests should be given the same weight as any other animal or human.

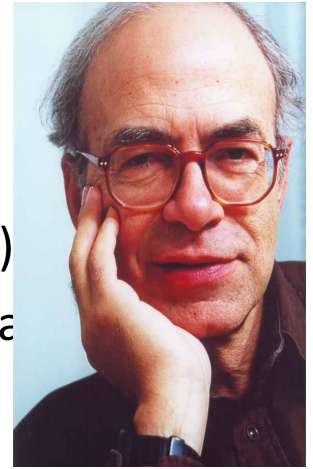


# Moral equality theories

- Sentience as a morally relevant criterion: Peter Singer
- Animal rights position: Tom Regan

Sentience : Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (1993)

- Inspired by Jeremy Bentham's classical utilitarianism (1780/1789)  
“... the question is not, Can they *reason*? Nor, Can they *talk*? But Can they *suffer*?”.



- Singer's position: moral status should be ascribed to all *sentient* animals.  
*Sentience* – capacity to experience episodes of positively and negatively valenced awareness, e.g. pleasure, joy, elation, pain, suffering, depression, anxiety.
- Sentient animals have an interest in enjoying pleasure and avoiding pain, and we should take this into consideration when making decisions that affect their interests and well-being.
- According to Singer this has important practical implications for vegetarianism, animal experimentation, etc.

Singer's account is based on two principles:

- 1. "The Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests"
- 2. "The Principle of Utility"

# Equal consideration of interest

“If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that the *suffering be counted equally with the like suffering* – in so far as rough comparisons can be made – of any other being.

If a being is not capable of suffering, or experiencing enjoyment or happiness, there is nothing to be taken into account. This is why *the limit of sentience...is the only defensible boundary* of concern for the interests of others.

To mark this boundary by some characteristic like intelligence or rationality would be to mark it in an *arbitrary* way. Why not choose some other characteristic, like skin or colour?” (Singer 1993:57-58).

# The Principle of Utility

- The Principle of Utility: Singer adopts a utilitarian perspective: we ought to judge actions as right or wrong on the basis of their consequences, and by comparing the value of different consequences.

- *How to compare different outcomes?*

How to compare joys and pains across species? Singer: our praxis of using animals harms their interests more than it benefits us.

Compare the human pleasure in eating chicken with the harm imposed on chicken in the production of meat.

▪ *Which animals and to what extent are sentient?*

We need to address this question to decide which creatures have moral status and to what degree.

This is not an easy task: *How can we assess animal feelings? What is it that we are studying when we study animal emotions?*

▪ *Singer: Killing animals (or humans) is not wrong per se* – only animals that are self-conscious have interest in continuing their life. Most animals aren't, most humans are. It is causing animals pain, not killing them that is usually not morally justified.



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
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OTHER  
MINDS | THE OCTOPUS,  
THE SEA, AND  
THE DEEP ORIGINS  
of CONSCIOUSNESS



PETER GODFREY-SMITH

Animal rights position: Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*



Deontological approach & critique of utilitarianism:

- Utilitarianism treats individuals as means to ends, and not as ends in themselves. For utilitarianism individuals (animals and humans) are valuable to the extent that they contribute to making the world a better place to be - individuals are replaceable.
- The principle of equal consideration of interest takes interests as primary concern, and not the *individuals* with the interests.
- Regan thinks this is a mistake: the reason the interests matter is because the individuals matter. For Regan, interests are attached to *individuals*, and this has moral importance.
- Animals have the same moral status as human beings that is grounded on rights not on utilitarian principles.

Animal rights position: *How does Regan argue for animal rights?*

- Postulate of Inherent Value: Individuals have *an inherent value* that is independent of their experiences or their value for others. Inherent value is ascribed *to individuals* on the basis of *certain characteristics*. Inherent value does not come in degrees.



# Animal Rights

- Characteristic relevant for being subject-for-a-life:

“beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future (...), feelings of pleasure and pain; preference- and welfare-interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychophysical identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independently of their utility for others and ... of their being the object of anyone else's interests” (The Case for Animal Rights, 243)

- The principle of respect:

we ought to treat beings with inherent value with the respect they are due as a matter of justice. It is impermissible to treat beings with inherent value merely as means to our ends. We have both negative and positive duties towards beings with inherent value.

# Comparing moral equality theories: sentience vs. rights

- Both Singer and Regan draw quite radical practical implications from their respective theories.
- While Singer's theory probably includes *more animals (sentience as a criterion)* than Regan's theory (*being subject for a life*), Regan's account is more stringent and gives better moral protection for the animals in question – killing animals that have inherent value is wrong per se.

# Comparing moral equality theories: sentience vs rights

## Singer condemns:

- factory farming – compare animal suffering with culinary pleasures
- most experimentation in which animals are used - many of the experiments performed using animal subjects do not have benefits for human beings that would outweigh the pain caused to the animals.
- including most experiments that are aimed at preventing or curing human diseases - if we are prepared to use animal subjects for such experiments, then it would actually be better from a scientific point of view to use human subjects instead, for there would be no question of cross-species comparisons when interpreting the data.

# Animal research

- Is it morally permissible to experiment on animals for research?
- If so, what kind of animals?
- If so, what kind of research?

Numbers are hard to obtain partly due to a lack of public registries of animal studies. Recent estimates:

- 100 million vertebrates used around the world every year, 10–11 million of them in the EU
- The Nuffield Council on Bioethics: global annual estimates range from 50 to 100 million animals. None of the figures include invertebrates such as shrimp and fruit flies.
- The US Department of Agriculture (USDA): the total number of animals used in the US during 2015 was 820,812 -- down from almost 1.2 million in 2005, however, but excluding rats and mice, which make up around 90% of research animals.
- EU Speaking of Research: around 12 million vertebrates were used in research in the US in 2016.
- Actually, we may be using them more than we used to:  
Goodman, J., Chandna, A., Roe, K. (2015). Trends in animal use at US research facilities, *Journal of Medical Ethics*: the use of animals in the US has dramatically increased in recent years. Researchers found this increase is largely the result of an increased reliance on genetically modified mice in animal studies.

Is it morally permissible to eat meat?



Is it morally permissible to eat meat  
the nice way?



# Eating animal the nice way

- Many object to industrial farming. But some animals are being treated far better
- Suppose the animals live a good life and are killed painlessly.
- Would it *then* be permissible to eat them?

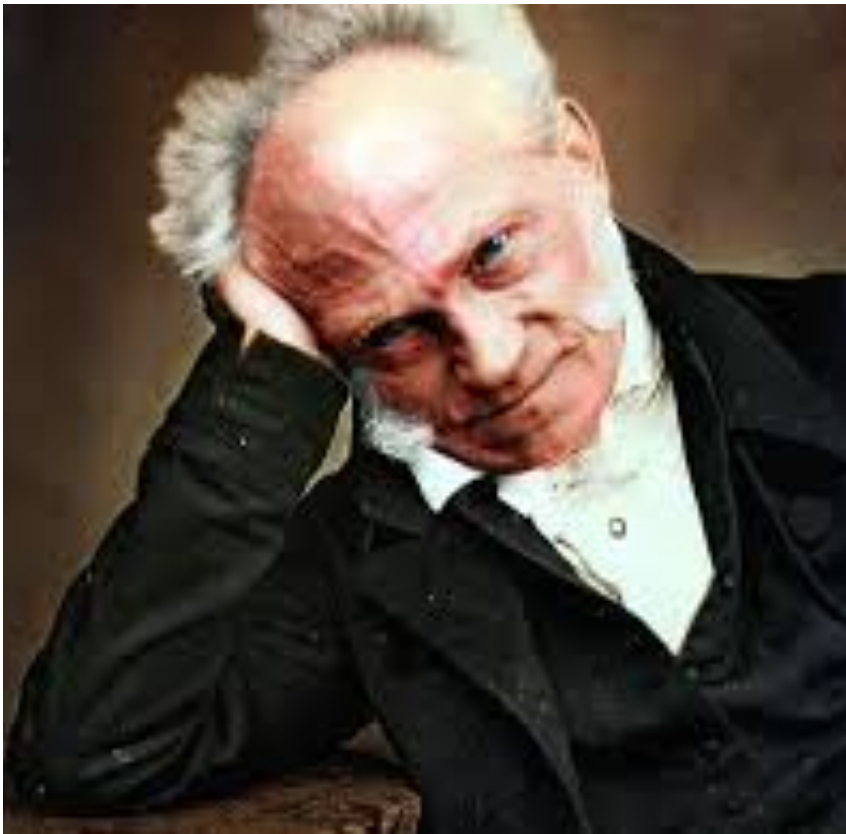


# Eating animals the nice way

- All farming animals live very short lives
- But these animals *would not have existed* if not for the fact that they would be eaten
- However, consider a similar practice for humans.
- What is the morally relevant difference?

# Wild animal suffering and human intervention

**Arthur Schopenhauer**



”One simple test of whether the pleasures of the world outweighs the pain... is to consider the feelings of an animals devouring another with the feelings of the animal being devoured”

(On the suffering of the world)

# Should we eliminate predation?

**Jeff McMahan**



- Suppose we had the means to exterminate carnivours: wolves, lions etc.
- Predation causes enourmous amount of suffering

- Obvious counterarguments:
- We dont have the ability
- It would be counterproductive
- But suppose we could do it an a way that would not be counterproductive?

# Environmental ethics

- **Instrumental value:** the value something has in virtue of something else
- **Inherent value:** the value something has in itself
- Human- centred ethics
- Animal-centred ethics
- Life centred- ethics

# Deep Ecology

1. The well-being of and flourishing of human and non-human life (including species, habitat, ecosystems etc) on earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs

# The species vs. individual

- What is the value of the species, as opposed to the individual?
- Does the existence of a species have an *inherent* value?
- Is this value irreplacable?
- Would the world be a worse place if we made the elephant extinct, but cloned the mammut?