Animal Rights and Human Responsibilities
Resource Sheet

Dennis McCallum

This quote sheet is passed out, but held in reserve during the discussion and if appropriate, selected quotes are read aloud at points to stimulate conversation.

Aristotle

Held to four distinct levels of matter:

1. Inert, inanimate matter
2. Plants: capable of self-nourishment and reproduction
3. Animals: endowed with sensation, motion, and all degrees of mental functions except reason
4. Man: all that animals have + reason

Rene Descartes

Animals = pure machines | Man = machines + minds

John Locke

Thoughts come from sensation and from reflection. Animals have particular sensory ideas and limited powers of reason. But they have no general ideas or powers of abstraction and consequently no language for their expression.

Charles Darwin

“Attempted to show that in varying degrees, animals use tools, form abstract concepts, employ language, and experience beauty and reverence.”

Tom Regan


"[with commercial animal agriculture] the fundamental wrong here is not that animals are kept in stressful close confinement or in isolation, or that their pain and suffering, their needs and preferences are ignored or discounted. All these are wrong, of course, but they are not the fundamental wrong . . . The deeper systematic wrong [is] the [view] that allows these animals to be viewed and treated as lacking independent value, as resources for us--as, indeed, a renewable resource. Giving farm animals more space, more natural environments, more companions does
not right the fundamental wrong, any more than giving lab animals more anesthesia or bigger, cleaner cages would right the fundamental wrong in their case. Nothing less than the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture will do this..." 114

Peter Singer


- "We would be on shaky ground if we were to demand equality for blacks, women and other groups of oppressed humans while denying equal consideration to non humans." 75
- Opponents of equality between races and sexes argue that there are differences either between races of sexes, and therefore we are justified if we prefer the interests of one type over the other. . . .our concern for others ought not to depend on what they are like, or what abilities they possess. . . .If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit non humans? p. 77,78
- The racist violates the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of his own race. . . .Similarly, the speciesist allows the interests of his own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. p. 79
- [the question has been] . . . "would the abolitionist be prepared to let thousands die if they could be saved by experimenting on a single animal? . . . The way to reply is . . . 'Would the experimenter be prepared to perform his experiment on an orphaned human infant, if that were the only way to save many lives?" p. 80
- Singer argues that "sentience" loosely defined as the ability to suffer is the dividing line between those who must be treated equally because they have rights.
- If human infants have lower IQ and less sensation to pain than chimpanzees, experiments on chimps would be worse than using human babies.
- "Experimenting on animals, and eating their flesh, are perhaps the two major forms of speciesism in our society . . . ." p. 81
- The idea of a distinctive human dignity and worth . . . goes back to both classical and Judeo-Christian doctrines. Contemporary philosophers have cast off these metaphysical and religious shackles. . . . [but] Once we ask why it should be that all humans--including infants, mental defectives, psychopaths, Hitler, Stalin, and the rest--have some kind of dignity or worth that no elephant, pig, or chimpanzee can ever achieve, we see that this question is as difficult to answer [as the basis for animal rights]. . . . talk of intrinsic dignity of moral worth only takes the problem back one step . . . Philosophers frequently introduce ideas of dignity, respect, and worth at the point at which other reasons appear to be lacking, but this is hardly good enough." p. 83
- In case there are those who still think it may be possible to find some relevant characteristic that distinguishes all humans from all members of other species, I shall refer . . . to the existence of some humans who quite clearly are below the level of awareness, self-consciousness, intelligence, and sentience, of many non-humans." 83
- Quoting Stanley Benn's article, "Egalitarianism and Equal Consideration of Interests" (Nomos IX Equality p.62ff) where he argues that equality of consideration for all humans regardless of differences is the only basis for egalitarianism but then says, "not to possess human shape is a disqualifying condition. However faithful or intelligent a dog may be, it would be a monstrous sentimentality to attribute to him interests that could be weighed in an equal balance with those of human beings. . . . if, for instance, one had to decide between feeding a hungry baby or a hungry dog, anyone who chose the dog would generally be reckoned morally defective, unable to recognize a fundamental inequality of claims." . . . but why should there be any fundamental inequality of claims between a dog and a human imbecile? . . . That the imbecile is not rational is
just the way things have worked out, and the same is true of the dog--neither is any more responsible for their mental level. . . p. 84

Lawrence C. Becker


"There are certain traits of character people ought to have . . . [which] order preferences by "social distance"--that is, give priority to the interests of those "closer" to us in social relationships over the interests of those farther away. Animals are typically "farther away" from us than other human beings . . ." p. 87

James Rachels


- "Darwinism also undermines some aspects of traditional morality. Traditional morality depends, at crucial points, on the assumption that there is something morally special about being human--The fact that a being is human, rather than, say, canine or bovine, makes a big difference, according to traditional morality, in how it may be treated. My thesis is that "the gradual illumination of men's minds," of the sort provided by Darwin's theory, must lead inevitably to the conclusion that this assumption is false."
- "Unqualified speciesism and racism are twin doctrines." p. 97

R. G. Frey


[Regan cites the case of deficient humans to show we must grant animal rights] But I do not regard all human life as of equal value; I do not accept that a very severely mentally-enfeebled human or an elderly human fully in the grip of senile dementia or an infant born with only half a brain has a life whose value is equal to that of normal, adult humans." p. 116

[We withhold the name of this next author until after reading one or two quotes. Only after people react do we reveal that the author is Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, James Murphy trans., (London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd.)]

- "Under certain circumstances, in periods of distress or under bad climatic condition, or if the soil yields too poor a return, nature herself tends to check the increase of population in some countries and among some races, but by a method which is quite as ruthless as it is wise. It does not impede the procreative faculty as such; but it does impede the further existence of the offspring by submitting it to such test and privation that everything which is less strong or less healthy is forced to retreat into a bosom of the unknown. Whatever survives these hardships of existence has been tested and tried a thousand fold, hardened and rendered fit to continue the process of
procreation; so that the same thorough selection will begin all over again. By thus dealing brutally with the individual and recalling him the very moment he shows that he is not fitted for the trials of life, Nature preserves the strength of the race and the species and raises it to the highest degree of efficiency." p. 82, 83

- "Man must realize that a fundamental law of necessity reigns throughout the whole realm of nature and that his existence is subject to the law of eternal struggle and strife. He will then feel that there cannot be a separate law for mankind in a world in which planets and suns follow their orbits, where moons and planets trace their destined paths, where the strong are always the masters of the weak and where those subject to such laws must obey them or be destroyed. Man must also submit to the eternal principles of this supreme wisdom. He may try to understand them but he can never free himself from their sway. " p.141

- "It would be impossible to find a fox which has a kindly and protective disposition towards geese, just as no cat exists which has a friendly disposition towards mice. That is why the struggle between the various species does not arise from a feeling of mutual antipathy but rather from hunger and love. In both cases Nature looks on calmly and is even pleased with what happens. The struggle for the daily livelihood leaves behind in the ruck everything that is weak or diseased or wavering; while the flight of the male to possess the female give to the strongest the right, or at least, the possibility to propagate its kind And this struggle is a means of furthering the health and powers of resistance in the species. Thus it is one of the causes underlying the process of development towards a higher quality of being." p. 161

The Bible

- Genesis 2:19,20 "Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable [or corresponding] helper was found."

- Deuteronomy 22:10 "Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together."

- God speaking in Jonah 4:11: "Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

- Proverbs 12:10 "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel."

Current Trends

- AP poll reported in Columbus Dispatch, Sunday Dec. 3, 1995 p. 5.f.
  - The poll found wide-spread support for beliefs usually associated with a tiny minority of animal rights activists. (see charts)
  - The number of animals used in scientific research has dropped by about half since 1968... [mainly due to] advances such as cell-culturing and computer-modeling, combined with effects of protesters.
  - More than 500 companies now boast that they don't test their cosmetics or household products on animals.
  - 5.9% of Americans bought hunting licenses in 94 compared to 7.7% in 1975 (decrease of 24%) mainly because of increased urbanization and decreased availability of places to hunt.

- Petersen, from Fund for Animals in Silver Spring, MD, "I don't believe any creature is put on this Earth for my benefit, be it a dog, elephant or worm."