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Ethics & Environment

Broadening Our Views: Animals & People

- Environmental Ethics aims to zoom out the focus of morality from just people
- The concept of animal welfare was popularized by Jeremy Bentham:
 - Believing that pleasure and pain is what determined right and wrong, he determined there is an argument to include the treatment of animals within this scope
 - Animals, too, should not have to face unnecessary suffering
- However, this leads to some issues when trying to make a moral judgment
 - Which animals are included under this protected welfare, when is it justified (i.e. for human consumption vs testing products), does this mean there are 'more important' animals, and is that fair?



Where do we draw the line?

“morally speaking, animals matter, even if they do not matter as much as human beings.”

If we should prevent unnecessary suffering, what constitutes as “necessary” suffering?

- Production of food
- Testing for medical or scientific advancement
 - Animals should still be treated well even when being raised for these purposes.

On the other hand, animal welfare is against animals being used for things like entertainment or cosmetics.

- Circus performances, cockfighting, etc.
- Exotic animal parts being used in clothing or accessories

However, these are still done in many parts of the world.

Applying ethics to animals is still very nebulous; what “rights” should be afforded to animals?

Many ideas such as contractualism simply do not apply to animals.

The topic of animal rights is still highly debated and contentious.

It is difficult to come to ethical agreements for subjects that cannot speak for themselves.



What Is “Environmental” Ethics?

- No longer anthropocentric
 - Sharp turn from previous theories
 - E.g. contractualism, egoism, etc.
- Human concerns are a subset of greater issues
 - A subset of the environment, nature, biosphere, etc.
- More than just climate
 - Animal rights, biodiversity, “natural” beauty
- Is this really separate from human concerns?
 - Shallow ecology: indirectly involved with the concerns of humans
 - Deep ecology: nature holds far more than positive traits
 - Deep fear of the “power” that nature has
 - “Promethean” fear: “a fear of taking too lightly or inconsiderately our relations to nature.”



Why has environmental ethics become prominent?

- What are some reasons that everyone thinks ?
- Global warming/Climate change
 - Would an egoist care about this?
 - I.e. global warming won't affect them (minimal) but it will later generations
 - Ecological consequences
 - Global significance
 - Choice of operating a car
- Pollution
 - Pesticides and chemicals
 - Health concern
- “Limit to growth”
 - Limited resources on a finite planet
 - How do we conserve resources for a long term?



Thank you