

Introduction to:

In Search of Consistency

The Introduction positions the work in the field of applied philosophy, discusses the use of lifeboat scenarios, and defines key terms such as morally relevant distinction, inherent value, casuistry, speciesism, impartiality, and consistency and logical extremes.

Part II

The second section of *In Search of Consistency* includes three chapters dedicated to a critical examination of the work of Regan, Singer, and Taylor, respectively.

The second chapter focuses on Tom Regan's "Rights View" looks at equal inherent value, welfare of individuals, moral standing, his Respect Principle and his Harm Principle, and his ideas regarding overriding rights. Discussion focuses on methods such as the use of intuition, key ideas (Regan's focus on "opportunities for satisfaction," assumptions about moral agency and inherent value, and his attribution of "subject-of-a-life), and undesirable consequences regarding innocent threats, loss of innocence, and the obligation to defend.

The third chapter focuses on the utilitarian theory of Peter Singer, first exploring utilitarianism itself, as well as sentience, and then Singer's use of mental capacity, and his approach to death and killing. Discussion focuses on common concerns (such as moving moral boundaries rather than removing arbitrary boundaries), problems associated with utilitarianism (employing the theory and also the outcome of expendability of individuals on behalf of some perceived greater good), sentience, mental capacity (focusing largely on speciesist tendencies, but also exploring epistemological problems and the problem of actually using a utilitarian calculation), reason in utilitarian calculations (without virtues such as compassion), and speciesism.

The fourth chapter looks to the environmental ethics of Paul Taylor, beginning with the uneasy alliance of environmental ethics and animal ethics, then focusing on two key areas, the foundation of Taylor's theory and his core idea of "Respect for Nature." With regard to foundations, the text explores the distinctions of individual versus species and natural versus nonnatural, and the concepts of moral standing (including teleology), moral agents and moral patients, and various applications of "rights" (such as legal, individual, and human rights), and finally the philosophical principles and standards which he upheld in developing his theory. The next section begins with Taylor's core idea, "Respect for Nature," including the biocentric outlook (a view of interdependence, equality, and taking the viewpoint of others) and an attitude of respect for nature), then moves to his four rules of moral triage (nonmaleficence, noninterference, fidelity, and restitutive justice) and his five core principles (self defence, proportionality, minimum wrong, distributive justice, and restitutive justice). Discussion revolves around Taylor's controversial assumptions, theoretical concerns, and Taylor's tendency toward human centrism.

Part III

The next two chapters of this ambitious book explore religious ethics and animals, beginning with Linzey's presentation of Christian ethics, and then branching out to elucidate moral consistency across religious traditions. Before turning to Linzey's theological views, the fifth chapter explores theology itself, and key shifts in Christian ethics across time regarding animals.

The next topic is Linzey's theory of Christian animal ethics, starting with the creation story (shared origins, concerns of idolatry and humanism, and Linzey's "theos-rights"), covenant, scriptural challenges to Linzey's view (such as animal sacrifice), the giving of human dominion, and teachings as to what we are to eat. Next, *In Search of Consistency* reflects on the moral relevance of the life of Jesus as presented in scripture, then focuses on Linzey's "Generosity Paradigm," including his use of hierarchy and of salvation as determined through human treatment of animals. Discussion begins with general issues (theological assumptions and the preeminence of the gospels), then moves to interpretations of scripture (Genesis on diet, Swine of Gerasene, Acts 10:9-16, Romans 14:13-21 and 1 Corinthians 8, Ecclesiastes 3:18-21, John 4:8 and 4:16, and Isaiah 11:6-9), closing with theoretical concerns, most of which center on his use of hierarchy, but also with regard to the focus on God rather than animals, and the reality of divergent Biblical stories, such as that of creation and of covenants.

The second chapter in Part III, the sixth chapter, explores animal ethics across religious traditions, including indigenous religious traditions, Vedic/Hindu, Buddhist, Daoism and Confucianism, and Islam. This chapter finds a strong measure of consistency across religious traditions: At least in their teachings, religious traditions are overwhelmingly animal friendly.

Part IV focuses on consistency, impartiality, and logical extremes presenting an original—and in some ways unmatched—moral theory in the field of animal ethics. The first chapter in this section, Chapter Seven, provides six medical cases to exemplify the extreme value afforded human life. Chapter Eight takes on the daunting task of presenting an impartial theory, providing a moral view in which humans are equal members in a menagerie of morally considerable animals—an ethic where might does not make right, and which holds an assumption of sameness inasmuch as we are all animals, evolved from common ancestors. This chapter lives up to the ideal of morality that we make a sincere effort at impartiality such that the value of life does not change according to species, race, or sex. In this theory, where no morally relevant distinction between one species and all others can be demonstrated, the assumption is that we ought to extend our ethical code to include other creatures. Toward this end, Chapter 8 presents the Minimize Harm Maxim rooted in three premises:

- All living entities have moral standing.
- Death and harm are part of life.
- Hierarchies of moral standing are indefensible.

The Minimize Harm Maxim includes four subpoints qualifying the concept of minimizing harm, ultimately presenting a parallel theory extending ethics with regard to human life to all living entities.

Chapter 9 applies the Minimize Harm Maxim to contemporary issues in animal ethics, including exploiting animals in zoos and circuses and for clothing, food, science, and as companions. The chapter then presents two hypothetical scenarios in order to apply contemporary ethical standards regarding human life to other life-forms, one a medical scenario and the other a lifeboat scenario, reaching unexpected and somewhat startling conclusions that are rooted in common inconsistencies in contemporary applied philosophy.

For those who delight in philosophy as a verb, who enjoy gestalt shifts sprinkled with humor, *In Search of Consistency*—the extensive examination of consistency and impartiality in applied moral philosophy—qualifies both as art and as ethics.

untenable yet commonly accepted practices or reveal that an apparent absurdity actually is absurd. Why are we drinking from the teats of cattle? Exploring logical extremes can reveal something that is in fact absurd but that has gone unnoticed because it is a widespread practice. Human beings may go to remarkable extremes to avoid death. In contrast, we harm and destroy millions of other living entities routinely for the sake of testing the toxicity of household products (or cosmetics) and to satisfy culinary preferences. Widespread practices are often the best targets for taking a common practice or idea to its logical extreme. What if we approached all life as we approach human life? What if we apply our extreme approach to human life to all life that is similar in morally relevant ways? Carrying our current attitude toward human life to its logical extreme—applying this principle to other mammals, for example, reveals our inconsistency. For example, many citizens believe that experimenting on Barbary apes, domestic cats, or albino rats is necessary—that experiments are the harbingers of tremendous medical benefits—yet they recoil when they hear about the Tuskegee syphilis studies conducted on poor men of African descent or the hepatitis studies conducted on severely mentally disadvantaged children (Regan, “Animal” 68–69, 78–79). Did we learn something of value from these studies? Yes. Does that make them okay? Most of us offer a resounding, “No!” Taking our view of animal experimentation to its extreme—applying it to human scenarios—reveals how we really feel about purposefully causing others to suffer and die for medical advances. Similarly, a majority of citizens remain completely unaware that there is absolutely no biological need to eat flesh or drink the nursing milk of other mammals. Most people continue to believe that drinking nursing milk after we have been weaned from our mother’s breasts and eating the bodies of Cornish chickens, Hereford cattle, spotted pigs, and Coho salmon are important to good health—in spite of evidence to the contrary. The glaring inconsistency between what we do to animals and what we do for ourselves, what we want for them and what we want for ourselves, flies in the face of basic principles of justice, attracts philosophic sideways glances, and demands a thorough examination of current practices, morality, and protectionist philosophy. Taking such accepted practices to their logical extremes—applying them across species that are similar in morally relevant ways—is an effective philosophical tool for critically examining the morality of current beliefs and practices.

Animal suffering and loss of life are not the focus of this book (though the extreme suffering of billions of animals is certainly a motivating factor). Rather, this book falls into a long line of scholarly work written to encourage practical changes that will secure the safety of suffering and dying animals. What is key is to understand that life has tremendous value to the one possessing that life. Life matters enormously to almost every entity that lives.

Casualty is central to this text; it is a method used by moral philosophers whereby a specific instance is compared with rulings in other similar cases to reach a comparable and therefore presumably just verdict. Casualty entails reflection on a given problem in light of relevant accepted maxims and similar cases from the past, with intent to reach an informed moral judgment regarding a given problem (Jonsen 1991).