

Are animals part of our moral community

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



" Moral community refers to the network of those to whom we recognize an ethical connection through the demands of justice, the bonds of compassion, or a sense of obligation" (Spohn). Different moral communities are found to be formed all around us with people who share similar beliefs and find common interests in living according to their moral philosophy. Although there are many moral communities split those from others, the majority of us all still share similar basic understandings of life. Living in the twenty-first century we as an American society have already adapted to meet and understand a few ground rules. Even though these things surely can occur and do still happen in the world, it is without doubt understood that acts such as human sacrifices, slavery, and even murder, are all acts that are inhumane and no longer accepting in this generation as it may have been in the generations before ours. With time our world evolves and not everything that was ok yesterday will be ok today or tomorrow. The world as a whole is constantly enforcing new laws and even ruling out some old ones. Freedom of speech, voting rights, and equality are only a few examples of what was once never even imaginable to people, yet today all who live in America and many who live outside of the United States have these abilities. People's opinions and viewpoints are constantly changing and with the power to voice those opinions, this can take our nation to all different directions. Today we legalize same-sex marriage in a few states; what's tomorrow going to look like? How animals should be treated is just as big a controversy as whether slavery, equality, or same-sex marriages are moral or not. A majority of people will consider animals as part of their moral community while the rest will not. The majority of people that do consider animals as part of their

moral community will range in many different reasons for doing so. They might be animal lovers. The type of person who finds animals adorable and simply cannot resist themselves from petting or holding an animal, they may even own a pet or two. Some animal lovers have a bigger sense of compassion and they may not even look at their animal as a pet but rather as family. Many humans bond with their animals as more than just a pet, in fact, many get pets in place of children even. Some even love animals more than people or even themselves. Matter of fact, there is even a website called just that, " I Love Animals More than People" where real people share their stories as to why they would prefer their pets over people any day. On this site you constantly read commentaries where they feel more comfortable and accepted with their pets than other people which is obviously why they have a deep sense of obligation toward them and stand up for their justice. The rest of the people that don't view animals as part of their moral community are people that may not necessarily even hate animals, although it can be a possibility, they may just not see the sense of obligation to feel the need to stand up for the justice of animals. This type of person also ranges in reasoning as to why they do not associate themselves with a moral view for animals. Perhaps this person has lived their life without ever having to need or have the opportunity to bond with an animal therefore they can care less about fighting for their rights. These types of people could have had unpleasant encounters with animals before and live disliking them. Others may simply just dislike them for no particular reason, obtain allergies from them so they don't associate themselves with them, or they may be ok with animals but just aren't too crazy about them. Again, just

because they don't have morals towards animals does not mean they hate animals, it can mean that that person finds compassion for other things. Religion is a huge factor to many decisions that people make. For example, Jews definitely consider animals as part of their moral community. They are against animal cruelty which is why they eat Kosher meat. " Since Jewish Law prohibits causing any pain to animals, the slaughtering has to be effected in such a way that unconsciousness is instantaneous and death occurs almost instantaneously" (Westheim). This means that the label " Kosher" verifies that the animal lived a happy and healthy life, it was never abused, and died painlessly. Buddhism like many other religions altogether preach in not partaking in the slaughter of animals and rather to be a vegetarian. In the Zen Master Thich Thanh Tu Udumbara Flowers; Book II, it is quoted " Being a vegetarian makes it easier for us to increase our loving kindness and compassion" (The role of Animals in Religion). With that being said, the reality is that not all of us are vegetarians. In fact, most of us aren't! We may not be animal abusers, we may even be animal lovers, but is it a sin to love eating meat? And who's to judge? A person's morals are influenced by varies exposures; religion, family, environment, your own self conscience, specific events, etc. Everyone is brought up differently therefore not everyone is going to think the same in terms of what is right and what is wrong. One person will idolize Moses and another will idolize Hitler and those people are completely able to be entitled to their opinions. One person will be completely against eating meat, another will eat meat but is against animal cruelty, one will eat meat and not care of how it was consumed, while another person is the one performing the slaughter. Each person has their

own unique take on the subject at hand. So how should all the different types of people come to an agreement of whether animals should have rights?

Agreeing with Jeremy Bentham, the founder of the reforming utilitarian school of moral philosophy, when he stated that when deciding on a being's rights, "The question is not 'Can they reason?' nor 'Can they talk?' but 'Can they suffer?'" This was the perfect question needed to be answered in order to finally settle this dispute on animal rights. When the basic principle of equality does not require equal or identical treatment but requires equal consideration, we need to show animals that equal consideration! Just imagining the abuse animal's encounter is saddening alone. We hear all kinds of stories of animal abuse such as kids finding amusing to put a lit firework in a dog's mouth and taping it shut to animal abuse on farms who produce our meat to local stores around us. All animals feel just like humans do. They can feel happiness, sadness, loneliness, frustration, depression, fear, pleasure, and of course pain just like we humans do. Every animal with a desire to live should be entitled to live a happy free life. Our ancestors have suffered great pain if not death do to their abuse in slavery. We all sympathize for them right? So why not show that same consideration to animals in which many are still going through that same abuse? We need to start! Making small attempt such as cutting back on too much dependence on meat can be a huge help on impacting the demand of animals killed for food. Not suggesting people to suddenly become vegetarians but small steps such as slightly cutting back on meat eating habits can be a great help. Another opportunity to help keep animals in the moral community is to adopt an animal and provide a new home for it, introduce them to a family and

love. If pets are too much a hassle, you can always donate as little as ten cents a day to help animals in need. People all over the world are looking for sponsors to help them with their needs and animals do too. Another great way to continue enjoying meat while keeping animals in an ethical light is to switch to Kosher meat (meat from animals that are guaranteed did not suffer). All in all, there are countless ways that people can respect animals and their rights without having to be vegetarians. Back in the mid twentieth century laws have been passed that protect animals from brutal and merciless treatment in medical and scientific research, inhumane and/or unlicensed slaughter for human consumption, and abuse. “ Organizations such as PETA and their many supporters are still trying to get a greater point across to end animal cruelty once and for all” (Farlex). Opponents argue greatly on issues such as how else would they be able to consume meat products if not killing animals, or if products are not tested on animals then who would they start running tests on to see if the products are safe to use? They rebuttal stating that cutting back on meat won't hurt anyone, or at least not abusing the animals they prepare to later kill for food. As far as testing products, there are many people willing to be tested on instead of animals. Like mentioned before, this is yet another argument that is equally important as the other controversy's seen in history. Although we have passed animal rights and animal welfare laws, “ while the animal rights position would hold that humans do not have the right to slaughter and eat animals, the animal welfare position would be that the animals should be treated humanely before and during slaughter. The animal welfare position would not object to the consumption of animals, but would seek the

elimination of cruel factory farming practices" (Lin). There are people that are out there still doing wrong upon innocent animals. This needs to be a part of our moral community, to be aware of what occurs around us and make it our obligation to stop the cruelty and murder. We have to acknowledge animals with rights like all other humans have. Be aware of what occurs around you and if you see an animal mistreated you need to report that just like any other crime because animals should be viewed as people with the same freedom, respect, and love. Work Cited Farlex. "Animal Rights." The Free Dictionary. N. p., n. d. Web. 16 Apr. 2013. . Lin, Doris. "Animal Rights v. Animal Welfare." About. com Animal Rights. N. p., 2013. Web. 17 Apr. 2013. . "Re: I Love Animals More Than People." Web log comment. RSS. N. p., 4 Nov. 2012. Web. 15 Apr. 2013. . Singer, Peter. "Why Animal Rights?" PETA, 2013. Web. 16 Apr. 2013. www.peta.org/about/why-peta/why-animal-rights.aspx Spohn, William. "Images Shape Our Moral Community." Santa Clara University. N. p., 2010. Web. 14 Apr. 2013. . "The role of Animals in Religion". N. p., n. d. Web 15 Apr. 2013. .