

Constantin Stamatis

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Faculty of Law, University Campus, GR-54124 Thessaloniki
stam-zick@otenet.gr

Is There an Intrinsic Worth in Animal Life?

Abstract

The article argues that moral autonomy and dignity as intrinsic values are borne only by members of mankind, and not by nonhuman animals. Although humans and animals inevitably cohabit nature, they cannot be considered to be united together within a moral community. However, animal life and formidable biological diversity are definitely worthy of existence on our planet, even if one day mankind vanishes from Earth. While animals are clearly not agents, they may well be recipients of moral obligations to be met by human agency. Treating animals in a decent way is a moral duty to ourselves. Following Kant, this duty is justifiable on the grounds that the animal world exhibits a certain analogy to mankind. Cautious concern for the natural world strengthens then our worth as rational beings.

Key words

humans, animals, autonomy, dignity, intrinsic worth, Immanuel Kant

1. Animals are not persons

Since time immemorial, nature has been traversed by multiple processes of evolution. The human species, too, has evolved impressively within it along the centuries. What can be termed as the value of nature is something appraised and ascribed to nature by *human* perception and conscience.

As humans, we can stipulate imperatives endowed with universal validity, laying down the way in which we ought to act vis-à-vis animal life. Based on this, we are able to augur principles of ecological ethics. But ecological ethics is still just as anthropocentric¹ as morals are more generally.

Animals manifest wants rightly arising from their physical constitution so as to suit the prevailing external circumstances of their lives. Properly speaking, animals cannot be held to have moral rights, such as, for example, the right to free action. Since nature is far from being a moral personality, it cannot bear “interests” or address claims of any kind. Accordingly, hypostatizing Nature (and the living organisms within it) into a mysterious “subject” of its own is a sheer mistake. *Flora and fauna are natural phenomena, not parts of some intelligible world.*

A moral agent is only a being capable of self-consciousness, of making distinctions between what is righteous or wrongful, and of acting accordingly.

1

See Onora O’Neill, “Necessary Anthropocentrism and Contingent Speciesism”, Symposium on “Kant on Duties Regarding

Non-Rational Nature”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. LXXIII (1998b), pp. 211–228.

This feature manifestly transcends the mere animality of human existence.² The idea that the bare fact of Life entails inner worth witnesses a (metaphysical) vitalistic ontology.

In fact, current “biocentric” or “ecocentric” conceptions of nature tend to canonise animals as quasi-moral agents.³ This strange elevation is, nonetheless, followed by a detrimental effect. Humans and animals alike are finally regarded to matter equally, just because they happen to be living. In view of this crudely naturalistic insight, the case of moral conscience is rather dwindling.

For Kant,⁴ if human beings possessed only mere understanding without reason, deprived of free will or morality, they would barely differ from animals. Men and women are singularly different from animals, even the most intelligent amongst them, whose instinct can sometimes operate more efficiently than man’s ingenuity in reacting to threats from their environment. Nevertheless, the intellect of humans is an *active* capacity. Their representations and notions are creations of their own meaning-giving activity, *in multiform communication with others*; so, they become capable of intervening in their own settings, natural and social.

Moral subjects are beings who can draw and live up to moral imperatives derived from the autonomy of their conscience. While animals are clearly not such subjects (*agents*), they may well be the *beneficiaries* of moral obligations to be met by members of the human community.

Martha Nussbaum thinks of nonhuman animals as “capable of dignified existence”.⁵ The author alleges that, although nonhuman animals are denuded of anything analogous to practical reason, all the same they are creatures with “a capacity to frame goals and projects and to plan [their] life”.⁶ We may say, in retort, that even if this allegation were more or less empirically ascertainable, this could not support the idea that animals might bear a degree of *practical* rationality apart from a rudimentary sort of *instrumental* intellect. But, if this precondition is missing, how could nonhuman animals be entitled to dignified existence, let alone entitled to some ensemble of rights?

I believe that, concerning this controversial issue, some obfuscation enters on the side of those who proclaim themselves opponents of the lamented “speciesism” of the human race in respect of animals. The status of moral agency simply means that mankind is a most *differing* species (*aliud*) in comparison to the rest of the animal world; not an animal species which is *superior* within a putative hierarchical order amongst living beings in nature. Thus, the accusation of quasi-racism, with which Peter Singer charges those who underline the disparity between humans and animals, is rather ill-founded.⁷

Bearers of dignity cannot be but equal. Otherwise, each of the bearers separately would be held to individuate a differential, namely a *relative and unequal*, moral worth in comparison with others; only within such a relativistic scheme could one speak of balancing different “interests” (or rights), so that one amongst these should perhaps yield to or even get sacrificed for the sake of a rival interest.

But, if we take the moral significance of inalienable worth seriously, then *no comparative assessment of worth is morally acceptable between singular bearers of dignity and rights*. The *intelligible* moral dignity of each person as an equal member of humanity is one thing, and it is quite another thing to make evaluative considerations on the basis of *actual* individual abilities and socially recognisable achievements of each one separately. To put it somewhat bluntly, Isaac Newton’s moral dignity was not “higher” than that of a simple-minded, illiterate shepherd.

In addition, *if dignity were only relative and conditional, then it would be simply subjective*. It could be a foundation of hypothetical imperatives concerning actions, thus entirely inappropriate to operate as an objective end given to us by reason.⁸

2. Moral autonomy, dignity and the right of humanity

Whilst our initial assumption refuses to assign the generic attribute of moral subject to animals – and with it the recognition of animal rights – the argument advanced, nevertheless, requires moral constraints on *human* action in regard to nature and especially animal life.

There is a *sui generis* moral terrain concerning *our* attitude towards animals. On the one hand, this attitude is of course regulated by the demarcation between “ought to act” in a specific way or “ought not to act”. But, on the other hand, there must be a certain space where neither some clear prohibition is valid nor full discretion of men and women over doing or omitting anything without limits is in force.

The latter space of morality is by no means uncharted. Within its boundaries, our behaviour is conditioned by reflective moral judgement, so that our action might be appraised as at least morally *tolerable*, in any case *not immoral*.⁹ For example, we may well be saying that, under specific circumstances, we are allowed to transport certain loads by horse, donkey or elephant, provided that the whole burden is not harmful for them.

Moral action is possible in the first place because humans have the ability to act *differently* than simply to comply with external laws or commandments. In fact, human agency is able to detach itself from external necessity or internal (psychological, emotional) causality, and get orientated by laws of freedom. The idea of the autonomously operating *good will* serves as an a priori condition of whatever might be considered to be morally significant.

It is to be noted that morality is not just the capacity of the consciousness of men and women to set out moral imperatives. What is more, morality means that human agency should operate as *autonomously* law-giving. Human agents are capable of intentionally observing moral principles out of a pure sense of

2 See Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg 2000, §1, p. 9 (Ak. VII, 127).

3 See, for instance, Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, 2nd edition, University of California Press, Berkeley 2004, chapter 7.

4 Immanuel Kant, “Der Streit der Fakultäten”, in: Immanuel Kant, *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik*, Vol. 1, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/M 1977, pp. 341–342 (A 117–118).

5 Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) – London 2007, chapter 6, pp. 325f.

6 Ibid., p. 398.

7 See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation. A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*, New York Review – Random House, New York 1975, especially chapter 1.

8 Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law. Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. by H. J. Paton, Routledge, London – New York 2005, p. 28 (66).

9 See Kant’s distinction between morally *obligatory* actions and simply *permissible* actions; Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. by Mary Gregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, p. 15 (Ak. VI, 222).

duty. Moral agents adopt “yardsticks” or guidelines for actions embodying, in a rational guise, the same scope of action for every other person. Moral laws are categorical and universal in respect of cases that fall within their normative span.

In being conscious of their moral autonomy, human beings shape a moral sense of dignity and self-appreciation. This is the deeper ground justifying why a rational human being expects others to treat her as an end in herself, and not merely as an instrument for alien ends. For all this, a rational person sees herself bound to treat any other person likewise, orientated by the same categorical imperative.

Following Kant’s framework, this consideration explicates why amongst all the other residents of the animal world only members of mankind earn such venerability, which singles them out from all other species and things in nature.¹⁰ In contrast to animals, we are in principle responsible for the good and the bad that we do, since our actions are *imputable*.

So, the dignity of a human being has value in itself; human beings are then ends in themselves. What constitutes the *intrinsic and absolute worth of a human being* is that, in fulfilling duties, he or she is not only subject to moral law, but is also and simultaneously held to be the very *author* of moral law “and is subordinated to it only on this ground”.¹¹

Albeit closely connected, dignity and humanity are not synonyms. While every single person is a bearer of *dignity* deserving equal respect in relation to others, the concept of humanity relates to the human species as a whole. *Humanity* refers ideally to the best powers, capabilities and achievements of mankind, which are liable to be furthered in a progressive perspective through history. More specifically, the *right of humanity* designates that we think of ourselves as co-legislators of rights according to the universal laws of freedom.

Apart from being moral agents, men and women are also *subjects of law* as regards the external enjoyment of their freedom within a certain legal order. From the scope of right within a polity, dignity is grounded in a combined way on three principal duties of right and on a single innate right:

- a) The Kantian general division of duties of right includes three principal duties.¹² These are valid even in the absence of statutory law. The interplay of these duties associates the field of legality with that of morality:
 - i) The first of these duties requires that one acts as an honourable person in relation to others. It commands an obligation which flows from the right of humanity in our own person: “Do not make yourself a mere means for others but be at the same time an end for them”.¹³
 - ii) The second formula enjoins: “do not wrong anyone”.
 - iii) The third duty requires: “Enter a condition in which what belongs to each can be secured to him against everyone else”.

A person who keeps to these duties possesses rightful honour. *Honestas juridica* consists in asserting *one’s worth as a human being* in relation to others under the laws of an external legislation. The first fundament of one’s human dignity as a subject of law lies here.

- b) At the same time, every member of mankind has an innate right: that of inalienable equal freedom. Every person is a priori entitled to this right by virtue of his/her humanity, even before he or she performs any act affecting rights at all.¹⁴ This involves every human person’s quality of being

his own master beyond reproach. The implied moral capacity forms the second fundament of human dignity from the angle of right. Thus, dignity becomes a grounding principle of justifying *acquired* rights, as well as *external* duties, prescribed by law.

Of course, human beings, unlike animals, may have useful skills in social communication and in economic transactions. It is very likely that a part of these capacities is translatable in terms of value of exchange, corresponding to some particular market price.¹⁵ Even when aspects of a human existence come to be subdued as tradable commodities for alien purposes, the human person always preserves something of value in itself and non-negotiable.

Treating people as ends in themselves entails that we ascribe inner value to them as rational beings. This is attributable not to their empirical (sensorial or psychical) life, but to the *intelligible* or *symbolic* dimension of their existence. In opposition to human beings, animals cannot be taken as ends in themselves. Their value is by no means absolute, but *relative* to their animal existence. Anything they do is far from being imputable, because they lack moral conscience.

This is not to imply that one ought not to employ other persons as assets for the purpose of attaining useful or pleasant goals, such as some service, labour or even (freely chosen) erotic intercourse. What is meant hereby is that using others is not at all included in this; we still have to behave towards each other as persons with dignity, in other words as persons possessing intrinsic worth superseding the value of a *mere* instrument.

The key to understanding our moral conduct concerning animals is that we can trace *a certain analogy to mankind* in animal life.¹⁶ The natural existence of animals permits such an analogy because they are sentient beings closely intertwined with human society. For this reason, *we* humans bear certain moral obligations towards animals, which are *analogous* with our respective obligations towards other members of mankind.

Beings other than moral persons display a *relative* (not absolute) worth, operative or sentimental (*Affektionspreis*).¹⁷ Their value is relative and conditional, since it admits of an equivalent or even a particular price. From this assumption, however, it does not follow that humans are morally allowed to treat animals in all possible ways, unlimitedly and without restraint. *Our moral obligations towards animals are in general congruous with their own animal nature. A range of these obligations also includes a positive exigency for good conditions of animal welfare.*

On the face of it, both statements are forceful. Animals do indeed have observable needs, which men and women ought to take seriously into account, given their close vicinity to animal life. However, this obligation emanates

10
I. Kant, *The Moral Law*, p. 117 (83).

11
Ibid., p. 119 (85–86).

12
I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals. The Doctrine of Right*, p. 29 (Ak. VI, 236).

13
Ibid.

14
Ibid., pp. 30–31 (Ak. VI, 237–238).

15
I. Kant, *The Moral Law*, p. 113 (77).

16
Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, ed. by Peter Heath, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, p. 212.

17
I. Kant, *The Moral Law*, p. 113 (77).

from moral conscience alone; therefore, this position cannot be reproached for being a manifestation of (human) chauvinism with regard to animals.

3. There is no moral community between humans and animals

Peter Singer argues that the moral principle of equality between humans obligates us to also extend the postulate of equal consideration to animals.¹⁸ Underlying this suggestion is apparently the belief that human persons and animals have interests. According to Singer, where “interests” are at stake, the moral rights of bearers are usually involved.

So, on this account, one is conveniently bound to consider both sorts of interests (human and animal alike) on an equal footing. This preliminary standpoint implies then that persons and animals are tied up in an *all-encompassing concept* for the reason that they together belong to an overarching moral community.

For a part of proponents of animal rights, this all-inclusive moral community is not due to some intellectual or moral similarity between human beings and animals. Rather, the common denominator rests elsewhere. It is simply a crucial *biological* tenet, which is taken to be morally important for both human persons and nonhuman animals. This common feature consists in the crude fact that both sides are sentient; thus, they can experience hardship, pain or pleasure.

It is undeniably true that feeling joy or displeasure is a common feature shared by humans and nonhuman animals; suffering too. As Kant wittily put it, nature subjects men and women “to all the evils of want, disease, and ultimately death, just as are the other animals on the earth. And so it will continue to be until one wide grave engulfs them all (...)”.¹⁹ As to the rest, however, Singer’s thesis is objectionable from a Kantian point of view.

First of all, moral community is not a concept of understanding (*Verstand*) which is related to empirically detectable characteristics of, for example, animal species. Instead, it consists in the idea of reason (*Vernunft*) as to the *intelligible* dimension of those who are considered to participate in such a community.

A second focus of dissent is, of course, the suggestion that human beings and animals might be indiscriminately considered to be inhabitants of one and the same *moral* community. One can easily acknowledge that the idea of assimilating humans and animals on the moral level contains perhaps a grain of truth with respect to its *assertive* branch, and not the normative one.

Kant diagnoses with sincerity that humans and animal species are indeed somewhat equated under the genus of *living organisms*.²⁰ If *externally* viewed, as natural beings, a clear analogy is patent between them. In fact, between human persons and animals there exists a visible similarity in terms of their moving and doing things, out of which various outcomes are likely to come about. Kant remarks that beavers can build lairs just as people can construct houses; but the salient difference is that humans can mould a *direct consciousness of their action* and their ingrained intentions.²¹

This is where the similarity stops, and a nodal dissimilitude between humans and animals appears. Even the categories of human beings who are unable to advance claims of rights (e.g., severely disabled persons or babies) are still members of mankind, unlike animals. Not only because their parents are also

humans, but also because such persons are embraced by the intelligible idea of humanity.

Instinct in animals differs greatly from reason. It is only by analogy that one might profess that animals “act” according to purposeful representations. This elementary capacity of theirs surely separates animals from machines. However, representations in the animal mind are quite alien to the perception of duty as an end of a *morally* committed action. Animals do not have this aptitude.

Even with the most charitable judgement of nonhuman beings, no form of animal life can reach a *self-determined subjectivity vested with the freedom of deliberate choosing in a principled guise*. A source of good will inheres only in human beings, so that they can become able to plea for principles of actions founded on self-disinterested (moral) and universally valid reasons.

This ability is further interconnected with a thick and composite array of other powers of human ingenuity; such are the faculties of reasoning in search of truth, and practical abilities guided by the regulative idea of doing what moral law enjoins. In exerting these powers, we need to meaningfully hand down notions and ideas mediated by language; the purport of all these is conveyable through educative and communicative processes.

Communication between rational beings proves to then be dependent upon a pivotal existential condition: communicating interlocutors do share in interwoven ways the very same world as their objectively existing reality.²² It is on this ground that people can entertain thoughts, moral reasons for actions and judgements, regardless of whether they happen to agree or disagree with each other.

Animals are entities governed by some pre-given structure of instincts and appetites. They are not able to achieve an image of a personal identity through superseding their sensible existence by a reason of *impersonal* practical considerations. Concomitantly, animals cannot be conceived of either as associates in the realm of a moral community or as holders of moral rights of any kind.

So, there appears a logical gap between the premises and the conclusion of the argument in favour of “animal rights”. The conclusion proves not to be compatible with its premises. For it is one thing to admit that animals have a life of their own and need *our* protection, but quite another to go as far as preaching that animals address “moral claims” to humans to do so.

Once again, if we are not required to handle animals as ends in themselves, it is simply because *animals are not persons*. This statement is to be read as a touchstone position of practical philosophy; it is not at all meant to be some misrecognition of animals arising from a putative human pretentiousness.

18

See P. Singer, *Animal Liberation*, chapter 1.

19

Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, ed. by James Creed Meredith, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1952, part two, p. 121 (452).

20

Ibid., part two, p. 137 (464), footnote.

21

Ibid., p. 136 (464), footnote.

22

See the analysis offered by Donald Davidson, *Subjective, Inter-subjective, Objective*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, chapter 7 (“Rational Animals”). While he denies that animals can really think, he is right in arguing that this property of theirs by no means authorises people not to treat animals in moral ways, pp. 96, 105.

4. Animal life has an immense value of existence

Animal life and nature have an immensely useful value, immediate or virtual, in the light of reasonable goals and objective needs of men and women. Having a natural existence of his/her own, any human person can grasp the impact of the life-giving feature of nature at large.

We can justifiably hold further that, as a whole, nature also has an incontrovertible *value of existence beyond considerations of utility*. Nature is composed of an amazingly intricate and glaring material totality, organic or not, which is perhaps unique within the so far discovered space of the universe. It is an ontologically objective and perennial property of our planet, irrespective of the historical evolution of the human species.

The value of this quality is not exactly “inherent”, as advocates of the biocentric way of thinking about nature would claim and have us believe. The biocentric standpoint holds that nature has a value in itself (worth) simply because it exists as a heavenly body in the universe. Supporters of the so-called Deep Ecology have preached that there is an element of tremendous significance and dignity which is entrenched in every living organism and sustains its own intrinsic worth.²³

That biological diversity on our planet is really invaluable has become commonplace today. It deserves to be substantially safeguarded as much *for the sake of animal life itself* as for the fact that it allows us to live in a much better way as human species.²⁴ More specifically:

- a) The *practical* preservation of biological diversity by humans brings aspects of nature to the measure of human objectives. But these objectives must be reasonable enough and the means employed proportionate to the importance of these purposes on the one hand, and to the possibility of ordinary rejuvenation in nature on the other.
- b) *Scientific* research of biological diversity and of the natural world enhances the sum of our cognitive faculties. It represents an invaluable source of knowledge of ongoing processes of evolution of the flora and fauna; hereby we can draw significant resources in order to think over our own future well-being as animal species on earth.
- c) No less beneficial is the *aesthetic* rejoicing over the diversity of flora and fauna. It gives rise to a wealth of imagination, emotions and tastes as incentives of an aesthetic culture and of a certain ennoblement of the inner world of humanity. What is beautiful in nature gives us pleasure which can be shared by everyone else beyond the mere sensibility of our existence. If anyone else can enjoy the same sublime spectacle in nature, then this is an intelligible taste which appraises the worth of others. In this light, “the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good”.²⁵

The value of animal life is interlocked with the domain of multifarious activities related to the human metabolism. Yet, the value of animal life as a whole is far broader and greater than the fact that several animal species secure manifold utility to human subsistence. Every animal species takes part in an astounding biological diversity and natural wealth on the globe. Bio-diversity needs to be continued as a part of the processes of evolution within nature.

We then have a duty to preserve nature as a whole. Not simply because of an anticipated utility to mankind, but for a deeply moral reason. *Cautious concern for the natural world invigorates our worth as rational beings*.²⁶ Therefore, *our self-respect as animal species encompasses the natural seedbed that*

has allowed us to grow throughout history under our own responsibility, capable of the good or the evil.

So, if we ought not to neglect or wound the animal side of our nature,²⁷ then the same imperative applies to the hostess – Nature. Subsequently, we ought to pursue what is good for nature, so that it can go on existing, even in the sorrowful hypothesis that, one day, mankind might become extinct.

5. A set of basic moral requirements regarding animals

Our moral duty to protect nature stems from an intractable prerogative of mankind. *While we are the sole animal species with a moral conscience, we are also the species par excellence that damages nature and animal life in irresponsible ways.*

The thesis deployed in this study can be summarised in the form of seven mutually reinforcing positions:

- a) Men and women undertake moral duties only towards other beings who are *persons* that are able to distinguish between what is morally incumbent and what is not. Such duties are binding either to ourselves or to others, within a framework of existent, possible or desirable relationships with them.
- b) Human agents, of course, have the tendency to experience compassion for the sufferings or calamities that animals undergo. Nonetheless, they do not bear *direct* moral obligations to beings that are not morally rational agents.²⁸ According to Kant, with regard to nonhuman natural beings, moral requirements are still binding for us.²⁹

Martha Nussbaum thinks that “we have obligations of justice to nonhuman animals” as a matter of “interspecies justice”.³⁰ From a Kantian perspective, the problem is that here a duty that we have *in regard to* animals is unduly conceived of as a duty *to* them.

- c) Treating animals in decent ways is a moral duty *to ourselves*, which we ought to fulfil out of a conscientious adherence to the respective commandment. This categorical imperative may, partly, well take on the form of a legal duty too, and so be integrated into rights.

Rights in general may well impose legal duties made publicly known. This seems necessary whenever a condition for preserving human life and the

23

See, for instance, Arne Naess’s emblematic article “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary”, *Inquiry* 16 (1973), pp. 95–100.

24

Cf. Thomas E. Hill, “Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments”, *Environmental Ethics* 5.3 (1996), pp. 211–224.

25

I. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, part one, pp. 223–224 (353).

26

See Paul Guyer, *Kant*, Routledge, London – New York 2006, pp. 355–357.

27

I. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, part two, § 22 (§83), p. 95 (432).

28

The rival position is propounded by Julian Franklin, *Animal Rights and Moral Philosophy*, Columbia University Press, New York 2005, pp. 77f.

29

I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals. The Doctrine of Virtue*, §16, p. 192 (Ak. VI, 442).

30

M. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, p. 327.

natural environment is damaged or threatened. Such is a duty to recycle things or to avoid activities against endangered animal species. In this case, from the normative scope of legality, what matters is simply that citizens *externally* conform to respective norms. Their actual motives for their actions, albeit morally important, are legally indifferent.

- d) This duty is justifiable on the grounds that the animal world exhibits *a certain analogy to mankind*.³¹ Behaving in mild and humane ways towards animals actually involves a duty commensurate with what we owe humanity. Moreover, protecting defenceless beings in nature, just as within the society of humans, reveals civilised behaviour and gentle spirit. So, as Kant states, in actively showing sympathy towards animals, we honour the moral person of humanity.³²

Conversely, exerting cruelty to animals is inconsistent with our own moral constitution. Hurting animals diminishes unnecessarily and greatly our preoccupation with acting rightfully towards our fellow humans themselves; whoever utilises animals brutally is usually gruesome in his/her behaviour towards men, women and children as well.

Whenever we use labouring animals for a useful activity, we must not exhaust them by exceeding their natural strength. When our animals get old and become no longer able to serve in such activities, we ought to care about them as we would about any fellow who has been devoted to us for a long time.³³

- e) It is inhumane to wound or slaughter animals gratuitously. Killing animals becomes perhaps morally tolerable:
- i) to the extent that the human species is in need of animal resources for nutrition;
 - ii) whenever animals of all sorts become dangerous or really bothersome to the human living. Even so,
 - iii) killing animals must be done in anodyne ways and rapidly.³⁴
- f) From all the considerations cited above, it follows that the leading guideline for our ethical attitude towards animal life can be a faithful attachment to the humane treatment of animals, which is correlative to the *reasonable* needs of human preservation. In our contact with animals, something can be ostensibly moral or immoral, in contrast to some other action which might be simply permissible or tolerable.
- g) Those who think that they have an absolute moral duty of respect for animal life, for instance, by eschewing animal food, is free to live a life guided by this practical maxim. But this is only a *subjective* maxim of action, which is morally unsusceptible of universal validity. For a vast majority of people, consuming animal products corresponds to a natural need. Naturally, anyone is free to decline, whether totally or partly, to take food of animal origin. But no one is authorised to forbid the opposite by virtue of an *authoritative* ruling given to people who believe that this simply corresponds to a *natural* appetite, tied to a real human need for nutrition.³⁵

Conclusion

A committed concern for nature asserts, above all, our worth as rational beings. *An adequate protection of Nature could come to fruition in a teleological dynamics roughly promoting a higher good all over the world.* Given this trajectory, deep reforms would seem to be necessary in the social and economic

structure. Economic growth and social development in the long run can be sustainable under the condition of *self-restrained affluence*. This invites us to reflect upon and publicly deliberate over the same, which could pave the way for a viable match between well-being and sociability on a worldwide scale.

Effective protection of the natural world requires, at the same time, substantial changes in the established forms of life and the concomitant realm of beliefs about the good. In a basic pattern of a good way of life, people would set about choosing pleasures and delights qualified by moderation and self-control, while being durable and beneficial to all.³⁶

The ultimate good we allude to would rest on an integral fulfilment of the human powers (theoretical, practical, aesthetical), in the perspective of a cosmopolitan self-determination for mankind. In case that men and women shift to comprehend the flavour of this ultimate end,³⁷ this will, amongst other traits, strengthen their aptitude for opting for the right thing over time; not only for themselves, but *also for the social and natural environment of animal life as a whole*.

References

Davidson, Donald, *Subjective, Inter-subjective, Objective*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.

Franklin, Julian, *Animal Rights and Moral Philosophy*, Columbia University Press, New York 2005.

Guyer, Paul, *Kant*, Routledge, London – New York 2006.

Hill, Thomas E., “Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving Natural Environments”, *Environmental Ethics* 5.3 (1996), pp. 211–224.

Kant, Immanuel, *The Critique of Judgement*, ed. by James Creed Meredith, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1952.

Kant, Immanuel, “Der Streit der Fakultäten”, in: Immanuel Kant, *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik*, Vol. 1, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/M 1977.

Kant, Immanuel, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. by Mary Gregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996.

Kant, Immanuel, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg 2000.

Kant, Immanuel, *Lectures on Ethics*, ed. by Peter Heath, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001.

Kant, Immanuel, *The Moral Law. Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. by H. J. Paton, Routledge, London – New York 2005.

31

I. Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 212.

32

Ibid., p. 212–213.

33

I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals. The Doctrine of Virtue*, §17, pp. 192–193 (Ak. VI, 443).

34

Ibid.

35

Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Penguin Press, New York 1994, pp. 320–322.

36

I. Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, §72, p. 166 (A 250).

37

See Kant's profound analysis on “the ultimate end of nature as a teleological system”; I. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, part two, § 22 (§83), pp. 92f. (429f.).

Naess, Arne, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary", *Inquiry* 16 (1973), pp. 95–100.

Nussbaum, Martha, *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) – London 2007.

O'Neill, Onora, "Necessary Anthropocentrism and Contingent Speciesism", Symposium on "Kant on Duties Regarding Non-Rational Nature", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. LXXIII (1998b), pp. 221–228.

Pollan, Michael, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Penguin Press, New York 1994.

Regan, Tom, *The Case for Animal Rights*, 2nd edition, University of California Press, Berkeley 2004.

Singer, Peter, *Animal Liberation. A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*, New York Review – Random House, New York 1975.

Constantin Stamatis

Ima li život životinjâ intrinzičnu vrijednost?

Sažetak

U članku se nude argumenti za tezu da samo pripadnici ljudskoga roda, a ne i ne-ljudske životinje, imaju moralnu autonomiju i dostojanstvo kao intrinzičnu vrijednost. Premda je kohabitacija ljudi i životinja u prirodi neizbježna, njih se ne može smatrati članovima jedne moralne zajednice. Međutim, život životinjâ i zastrašujuća biološka raznolikost svakako su vrijedni postojanja na našem planetu, čak i ako bi jednoga dana ljudski rod nestao sa Zemlje. Iako životinje zasigurno nisu subjekti, one bi mogle biti objekti moralnih dužnosti koje ljudsko djelovanje mora uvažiti. Primjereno postupanje sa životinjama moralna je dužnost prema nama samima. Slijedeći Kanta, ovu se dužnost može opravdati na temelju tvrdnje da životinjski svijet pokazuje određenu sličnost s ljudskim svijetom. U tom smislu, oprezni obzir spram prirodnoga svijeta jača vrijednost nas kao racionalnih bića.

Ključne riječi

ljudi, životinje, autonomija, dostojanstvo, intrinzična vrijednost, Immanuel Kant

Constantin Stamatis

Hat das Leben der Tiere einen intrinsischen Wert?

Zusammenfassung

In dem Artikel werden Argumente vorgebracht für die These, lediglich Angehörige des Menschengeschlechts, und nicht auch die nicht-menschlichen Tiere, hätten moralische Autonomie und Würde als einen intrinsischen Wert. Wenngleich die Kohabitation zwischen Menschen und Tieren in der Natur unvermeidlich ist, können sie nicht als Mitglieder einer moralischen Gemeinschaft erachtet werden. Allerdings sind das Leben der Tiere und die fürchterliche biologische Vielfalt einer Existenz auf unserem Planeten durchaus wert, selbst wenn das Menschengeschlecht eines Tages von der Erde verschwinden würde. Obwohl Tiere sicherlich keine Subjekte sind, könnten sie Objekte moralischer Pflichten sein, die das menschliche Tun wertschätzen muss. Eine angemessene Behandlung der Tiere ist eine moralische Pflicht gegenüber uns selbst. Diese Pflicht kann, Kant folgend, aufgrund der Behauptung gerechtfertigt werden, die Tierwelt weise eine gewisse Ähnlichkeit mit der Menschenwelt auf. In diesem Sinne stärkt eine achtsame Rücksicht gegenüber der Tierwelt den Wert von uns als rationalen Wesen.

Schlüsselwörter

Menschen, Tiere, Autonomie, Würde, intrinsischer Wert, Immanuel Kant

Constantin Stamatis

La vie des animaux a-t-elle une valeur intrinsèque?

Résumé

L'article propose des arguments en faveur de la thèse selon laquelle seuls les membres du genre humain, et non les animaux non humains, ont une autonomie morale et une dignité comme valeur intrinsèque. Bien que la cohabitation des êtres humains et des animaux dans la nature soit inévitable, ces derniers ne peuvent être considérés comme membres d'une communauté morale. Cependant, la vie des animaux et l'effrayante diversité biologique ont absolument une valeur d'existence sur notre planète, et cela même si le genre humain vient à disparaître de notre Terre. Bien que les animaux ne soient certes pas des sujets, ils peuvent être des objets de devoirs moraux que l'activité humaine doit valoriser. Une approche adéquate envers les animaux constitue un devoir moral envers nous-mêmes. Suivant la trace de Kant, ce devoir peut être justifié sur la base de l'affirmation selon laquelle le monde animal présente une certaine similarité avec le monde humain. En ce sens, une considération avisée envers le monde naturel renforce la valeur que nous avons de nous-mêmes comme êtres rationnels.

Mots-clés

personnes, animaux, autonomie, dignité, valeur intrinsèque, Emmanuel Kant