

## NONHUMAN ANIMALS RIGHT TO LIFE

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**Abstract** – Human beings are classified under kingdom animalia together with the nonhuman animals. Then where does the difference in value of human life over that of the nonhuman animals originate from? We have always conceived that human beings have inherent value unlike with the nonhuman animals. Life is conceived to be sacred, simply because man is seen to be created in image and likeness of God. Such a conception is also solidifies considering humanity as the center of what exist in the universe. The existence of humanity is rendered purposiveness unlike that of the nonhuman animals. Singer argues for nonhuman as having right for life on basis of ability to experience pain. Using analytic method, the researcher wishes to strengthen Singer’s argument for nonhuman animals’ right to life by saying that: we should be affectionate to nonhuman animals’ lives, just as we love our lives.

**Keywords:** Nonhuman, Animals, Right, Life.

### Introduction

In this chapter the researcher is interested in showing the relationship between man’s and animals’ lives. The point of convergence and divergence as far as life is concerned. There are various reasons that are used to justify human life as of higher value than that of nonhuman animals. Many times we tend to pursue our own interests and aspirations which benefit us; our attitude towards animals is dominated with anthropocentrism. We conceive our lives as more valuable and deserving more attention than that of animals. Nonhuman animals are used for human benefits, they are only valued in terms of how much profit we generate out of them. Tamed animals as well as wild animals are used in benefiting human beings and not for the good of the animals themselves.

### 1.1 Conception of animals lives

Man is an animal; the word ‘animal’ has its roots from a Latin word, *animalis* which simply means having a breath. Human beings have breath and, therefore, are classified as animals. “In order to show that man is an animal, one must show that every trait of man, bodily or non-bodily in nature, is a developed, complex or variant form of some animals character, differing from it in degree and not in kind.”<sup>1</sup> There are some similarities between nonhuman animals and humans.

The lacuna between us and nonhuman animals is of a variation in terms of ‘degree’. “Man’s capacity for happiness and sorrow, love and hate, his sense of beauty, of right and wrong, as well as his ability to remember, imagine and reason, were either duplicated in other animals or where present in them in a rudimentary form.”<sup>2</sup> Before looking at animal life, it is important to prepare the ground by first looking at the way humans conceive life. Singer tells us that, “people often say that life is sacred. They almost never mean what they say. They do not mean, as their words seem to imply, because if they did, killing a pig or pulling up a cabbage would be as abhorrent to them as the murder of a human being.”<sup>3</sup> Whenever life is referred to as sacred, it is simply human life and not just any other form of life. Our understanding of human life as sacred is greatly founded on, “our society and is enshrined in our laws.”<sup>4</sup> The society values human life and the objectivity of the State laws are to enhance respect for human life. Laws forbid any act which does not promote human respect to life. That is why practices like abortion, suicide and euthanasia are forbidden by the law.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Weiss, *Nature and Man* (London: Southern Illinois University Press, 1947), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Though animals' lives are not of the same level as that of humans, all exploitative activities are to be discouraged for they affect animals' lives. We need to be sensitive in the way we handle animals. We have a duty to care for animals and caring for the animals involves refraining from exploiting them. "It is often thought that human right to life entails not only a duty not to kill humans but also a duty to assist humans in preserving their lives. It might seem, then that if animals have a right to life, it follows that animals also have a duty to assist in preserving their lives."<sup>5</sup> Animals may not have the capacity to preserve their lives, but as human beings with the ability to decide and the reason we know what is good for the animals. We have the ability to preserve their lives as much as possible.

Life is something manifested through activities, these are "Nutrition, growth, and reproduction. Life is conceived as the capacity for self-movement."<sup>6</sup> Such characteristics are not only possessed by humans alone but by both plants and animals. Immanent activities are revealed only in living things since life is the capacity which makes the immanent activities like growth and nutrition to be possible. Human beings and animals, as well as plants, have common immanent characteristics. The characteristics give a common unity between human beings and the biosphere. Human beings have the ability to understand themselves to some extent as well as knowing other external objects around them. Unlike human beings animals have no capacity of understanding themselves, though they have the ability to be aware of external things. In other words, animals have consciousness while human beings are not only conscious but also self-conscious.

## 2.0 Life as intrinsic in animals

Life is something which manifests in animals as well as in plants. Life is something intrinsic; it exists uniformly in an organism. In other words life has no defined position in the body. We cannot therefore locate its occupation in the body. Life is revealed by some extrinsic as well as intrinsic characteristics in living things. A being endowed with life has the ability to assimilate: to grow, to reproduce, and excrete and finally to die. Since we are interested in animals we shall only look at humans *vis-a-vis* the nonhumans animals.

## 2.2 Origin of life in animals

There are different conception concerning the origin of life, whether of nonhuman animals or of humans. Some arguments show that, nonhuman animals and human beings share a common origin. "All animals' lives came from a common ancestor."<sup>7</sup> In other words, there is a commonality between man and nonhuman animals. Man should not consider himself as so different and distant from other animals. Due to natural selection and adaptation, there is diversity in living things. Man is an animal and has many similarities than differences with other animals. "Man in his arrogance thinks himself great work, worthy of the interposition of a deity. More humble and, I believe, true to consider him created from animals."<sup>8</sup> According to this view humans do not, therefore, have a different origin from other animals.

The most famous argument concerning the origin of life is based on the creation account in the Bible. In which all things were authored by God. Though man and animals were created by God, man is given dominion over all created things. Since man was put in charge of other beings in the universe and there is no wrong in using the creatures.

## 2.3 Characteristics of right to life in animals

Right to life is an entitlement which is guaranteed to all human beings. Life is something given by nature and not by laws. Laws can only be put in place to help in protecting life. "The idea of human rights is moral rather than legal in nature. Human rights primarily reflect people's aspirations. Rights proclaim widely accepted standards for freedom."<sup>9</sup> Rights aim at making man responsible for his freedom and rights necessarily imply duties. Though nonhuman animals are to be considered as having rights, they do not have duties imposed on them. Human beings are the one who have duties of ensuring that nonhuman animals have their rights respected. We have a duty of caring for animals as sentient beings.

<sup>5</sup> Aaron Simmons. Animals, Predators, the Right to Life and the Duty to Save Lives, on [www.stafforini.com](http://www.stafforini.com) (accessed on 26/7/2018 At 1030Hrs).

<sup>6</sup> J. F Donceel, *Philosophical Anthropology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), pp. 40 - 41.

<sup>7</sup> Keith A. Francis, *Charlse Darwin and the Origin of Species* (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), p. 121.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), p. 205

<sup>9</sup>Wiktor Osiatynski, *Human aright and Their Limits* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 1.

Singer reveals that the reason as to why some people consider nonhuman animals as not having the right to life is because of *speciesism*. That is why he says, “The only thing that distinguishes the infant from animals, in the eyes of those who claim it as *Homo sapiens*, whereas chimpanzees, dogs and pigs are not. Such a difference for granting right to life to infant and not to other animals is pure *speciesism*.”<sup>10</sup> The reason as to why Singer gives an infant as an example is because, we tend to deny animals rights on basis of capacity to reason, which is an ideal subjective and discriminative argument.

Many are times when we find nonhuman animals been subjected to cruelty. “Our conceptions of the nature of nonhuman animals, and faculty of reasoning about the implications that follow our conception of nature, also help to buttress our *speciest* attitudes. We have always liked to think of ourselves as less savage than other animals.”<sup>11</sup> Human beings consider themselves as more gentle, tough is not really the case, because the way we treat nonhuman animals reveals that we are full of anthropocentrism and prejudice. We treat non-human as though they have not inherent worth. We are not kind to nonhuman animals and therefore we are inhuman. Our way of relating with animals is full of nasty actions which are always cruel. That is why, “humans kill other animals for food or use them for sports to satisfy their curiosity, to beautify their bodies and to please their palates.”<sup>12</sup> We are therefore evil in our ways and manner of interacting with nonhuman animals. Humans always consider themselves as more superior than other animals and better placed in the universe than other entities.

There are times when human beings rights are considered to be inherent. “Human rights are inherent and belong to the human beings as such. It is believed that every person comes to existence endowed with these rights.”<sup>13</sup> The right to life is something intrinsic and therefore we are prohibited from denying anyone the right to life. Life is something so fundamental not only in human beings but also in other animals. Humans and nonhuman animals cannot carry out different activities without being alive. The loss of life in both human and nonhuman animals marks the end of their existence. Human life as well as integrity is something taken care of by right to life. Human right to life is protected through, “the ban on torture, prohibition against cruel and inhuman punishment, the obligation to treat detainees and prisoners humanely and strict limitations on medical experimentation.”<sup>14</sup> Any activity which does not promote respect to human life is considered as something wrong.

Singer has similar argument which aims at prohibit the use of animals as source of meat, use of animals in experiments and sports behind other exploitative activities. The ability of sentience is the basic foundation of equality as far as Singer’s argument for rights is concerned. That is why for him “all animals are equal.”<sup>15</sup> Singer urges for equality of human rights and animal rights. Animals’ interests are not to be considered as inferior hence deserving less or no attention at all. As long as a being has the ability to experience pain we cannot therefore justify denial of rights. Nonhuman animals are not entities that are set aside for torture and exploitation, rather are entities with rights. Nonhuman animals should no longer be treated instrumentally but rather as having a valuable life.

### 3.0 Animals’ consciousness

Consciousness refers to the aspect of being aware. “When we say that animals are endowed with consciousness, we simply mean that they know some objects and are affected in feelings or emotion, hence tend to move towards or away from them.”<sup>16</sup> Animals are inclined towards or away from things because, they are aware of external things. Though animals are conscious of lack of self-awareness, “they are not aware of the act by which they know such objects. They are unable to deflect their attention from their environment and to direct towards their own psychic activity that is, they cannot reflect upon themselves.”<sup>17</sup> The demarcation between human beings and nonhuman animals is underlined by the capacity of human beings having self- awareness. Self- awareness involves reflection which is only something done by the intellect. Intellect is found in human beings and not in nonhuman animals.

<sup>10</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation* Op. Cit., p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Osatynski, *Human Rights and Their limits*, Op. Cit., p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>15</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, Loc. Cit., p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Donceel, *Philosophical Anthropology*, Loc. Cit., p. 86.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

### 3.1 Tending animals

The advocates of animals' rights have the notion that, animals have rights. The execution of the rights may not be meaningful if animals' lives are not protected. "Animals rights activists have attempted to advocate the notion that animals, as with humans have an implicit right to life."<sup>18</sup> Singer understands that animals ought to be respected because they can experience pain; we are not supposed to exploit animals because doing so is violating their rights. "All animals have the basic moral right to a respectful treatment."<sup>19</sup> Treating nonhuman animals well may involve taking care of their interests, taking into consideration their pain and rights. According to Singer "It is impossible to defend a position on abortion and euthanasia without taking some view about the killing of nonhuman animals."<sup>20</sup> Abortion and euthanasia are forms of killing which involves voluntarily taking away human life. Animals also have their lives brought to premature death by human beings, hence bringing violently their lives to abrupt end.

The killing of nonhuman animals may not weigh the same as the killing of human beings. "In discussing the wrongness of killing nonhuman animals it is important to ask if any of them are persons. In other words are nonhuman animals' rational and self-conscious beings, aware of themselves as distinct entities with a past and a future."<sup>21</sup> Looking at such characteristics which define a person we shall be in a position to either say animals are persons or not. According to Singer we always "ignore the extent to which other species exhibit a complex social life, recognizing and relating to other members of their species as individuals."<sup>22</sup> Animals just like human beings exhibit behaviour that shows that they are social beings. Animals live in families that are led by elderly male or female. In the case of elephants, the family is usually led by an elderly male elephant.

Animals do not like being isolating from each other. "Herd or flock animals are disturbed when they are isolated from others of their species."<sup>23</sup> Singer does not separate treatment of humans and nonhuman animals, all are to be equally treated. We are in this case expected to treated nonhuman animals just like human beings. Lori claims that "if one values the life of a being that can enjoy life, then one must value every life of like beings in the same way."<sup>24</sup> There is no need for hierarchical consideration of lives. Singer says, "it is anthropocentric to order the value of different lives in a hierarchical manner. In case we do so, we shall inevitably be placing ourselves at the top and the beings closer to us in proportion to the resemblance between them and ourselves."<sup>25</sup> We should not, therefore, consider our lives as of more value than the lives of other nonhuman animals. All beings with sentient ability should be equally considered and valued.

Singer states that:

We should recognize that from the points of view of the different beings themselves, each life is of equal value. It may be true that a person's life may include the study of philosophy while a mouse's life cannot, but the pleasures of a mouse's life are all that the mouse has, and can be presumed to mean as much as to the mouse as the pleasures of a person's life mean to person. We cannot say that one is more or less valuable than the other.<sup>26</sup>

The capacity to reason which humans identify as a major demarcation between them and other animals is not a sufficient justification as to why we are to discriminate non human animals. Animals in the primates' family show many similar characteristics to that of human beings. "Chimpanzees, Bonobos, Gorillas, and Orangutans do think, have awareness, are capable of forming social bonds with others nonhuman animals and have a rich social and

<sup>18</sup> Essay on Animals' Right to Life. on [https:// ethics.com](https://ethics.com) (Retrieved on 28/7.2018).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), p. 223.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>24</sup> Lori Gruen, "Animals", in *A Companion to Ethics*, Peter Singer editor (New York: Blackwell publishers, 1991), p. 350.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University press, 1979), p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

emotional life.”<sup>27</sup> Animals love to interact with others of the same species and we should not interfere with their lives. We should guard the manner in which we interact with them.

#### 4.0 Human rights verses non-human rights

Humans are considered superior to other living things. Human beings are considered to have life, which is of higher value than that of nonhuman animals. The killing of human beings cannot be condemned with the same weight as the killing of brutes. Though humans and nonhuman animals possess life, their lives are not categorized as equal in value. Human life is seen as intrinsically valuable.

#### 4.1 The value of life

We should value human beings as well as nonhuman animals without discrimination, since animals have ability to experience pain. “It is always wrong to take life, other things being equal because life itself has value, whether conscious or not.”<sup>28</sup> The value of animal’s lives is revealed in their desire to live and obtain what is pleasurable. Value for animal’s lives are driven from, “their capacity to desire to go on living, or respect for autonomy, this capacity must apply to nonhuman animals as well.”<sup>29</sup> As humans, we should not neglect the lives of other sentient beings. Animals avoid pain and suffering because they value their lives.

In a situation where both human life and nonhuman animal life is in danger and only one of the lives can be rescued which one do we go for? According to Singer:

If we have to choose between the life of a human being and the life of another animal, we should choose to save the life of the human. There may be special cases in which the reverse holds true, because human beings who are mentally challenged, does not have the capacities of normal human being.<sup>30</sup>

Singer makes such a decision on the basis of preference of characteristics. What Singer is driving at is simply that, we should not make decisions on the basis of species, ought or not ought to rescue. That is why according to Singer, “when we consider members of our own species who lack the characteristics of a normal human, we cannot say that their lives are always to be preferred to those of other animals.”<sup>31</sup> We ought to respect animals’ lives without viewing them as inferior to us.

Singer shows that nonhuman animals deserve our respect, “as long as we remember that we should give the same respect to the lives of animals as we give to the lives of those humans at a similar mental level.”<sup>32</sup> Since we mind about the lives of human beings, including the mentally challenged, we should not neglect the lives of other animals. Animals have a value, and we should always value their lives. Since animals are sentient, their lives have a value. “Sentience suffices to place a being within the sphere of equal consideration of interests.”<sup>33</sup> Killing animals is wrong because besides causing pain to the animals, it deprives animals off their lives. According to Singer, we should become vegetarians as a way of preventing killing of nonhuman animals, hence protecting their lives. Singer aims at preserving animals’ lives that is why he considers abuse of nonhuman animals as something wrong. Killing often involves pain, and most of us would agree that it is wrong to cause pain in either humans or nonhuman animals unnecessarily.

Since the ability of sentience is something shared across all animals, “it seems very odd to think that animals’ lives do not count in terms of value. The worry about pain and suffering in part is simply the worry about the very negative drawbacks to a life that they impose whether in humans or nonhuman animals.”<sup>34</sup> Singer argues for equal consideration of rights in the sense that, he protects animals’ lives. That is why nonhuman animals should not be made to suffer. Suffering and pain affects the normal functioning of animals and even threatens their lives. Singer

<sup>27</sup>Lyne Mile, in Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Collins publishers, 2002), p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University press, 1979), p. 91.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Collins publishers, 2002), p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 102.

<sup>34</sup> Tamara L. Roleff, *The Rights of Animals* (New York: Greenhaven Press, 1999), p. 31.

imposes the idea of animals' rights because he values animals' lives. "Unless we think that those lives have some value, it is hard to see why we should care about ruining them or severely lowering their quality."<sup>35</sup> It is because we value nonhuman animal's lives, that we support them as having rights. Animals should be liberated from the bondage of human exploitation.

The lives of human beings are considered to be more appreciated than nonhuman animals. According to Reloff:

Where pain and suffering are concerned, I can see no difference between the human and animals cases. Where the destruction of valuable lives is concerned, those who destroy these valuable things owe us an explanation of how it can possibly be that species membership suffices to distinguish morally between two relevantly similar acts of killing.<sup>36</sup>

According to him, it is a form of *speciesism* to draw a difference between two acts of killing. Killing a human being and killing nonhuman animal for him should be considered, equally on the basis of the suffering induced. "Suppose we focus on killing; the boundaries to our discussion are clear, nonhuman animals count, and their lives have some value and destruction of these valuable things requires justification."<sup>37</sup> Animal's value of lives is shown by their desires to avoid pain and evade dangers that may come along their way.

#### 4.2 Human life in relation to nonhuman animal life

According to Singer, "it is always wrong to take an innocent human life. We call this the 'sanctity of life' view. People who take this view oppose abortion and euthanasia."<sup>38</sup> The reason as to why human life is considered to be of much value than that of other sentient beings is because it is holy. "They do not usually oppose the killing of nonhuman animals-so it would be more accurate to describe this view as the *sanctity of human life*. The belief that human life, and only human life, is sacrosanct is been *speciesism*."<sup>39</sup> Human beings are seen as beings that have dignity, ability to choose accordingly out of free will.

Human beings have the duty to care for their lives, "man has the right and duty to maintain himself in life, to preserve his existence as a human being compounded of soul and body. There will be no further human acts if the human being no longer exists."<sup>40</sup> Without human beings, the issue of rights, right and wrong cannot be meaningful. The emphasis is placed on the preservation of human life; man as the center of nature.

Singer further says that "Those who hold the sanctity of rights view do this because while distinguishing sharply between human beings and other animals they allow no distinctions to be made within species, objecting to the killing of the severely retarded and the hopelessly senile."<sup>41</sup> The difference we create between our lives and that of nonhuman animals is on the basis of the anthropocentric attitude. Man, therefore, measures himself as having a higher value than other beings within the same universe. "We must allow beings that are similar in relevant respects have a similar right to life and mere membership in our biological species cannot be a morally relevant criterion for this right."<sup>42</sup> We justify the value of human life on the basis of anthropocentrism, where human beings are considered as special species.

Singer points out that, on the basis of our anthropocentric attitude we still maintain that, "it is worse to kill a normal adult human, with capacity for self-awareness and the ability to plan for the future and have meaningful relations with others."<sup>43</sup> The capacity of reasoning becomes one of the reasons used to justify the value of human life. Human beings have the capacity to make long-term plans for the future, something which other animals cannot. That is why killing an animal with no such capacities is considered as moral. "Killing a mouse which presumably does not share all of these characteristics may not be viewed as something bad. Whatever criteria we

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Austin Fagothey, *Right and Reason Ethics in Theory and Practice* (New York: Mosby Company, 1959), p. 275.

<sup>41</sup> Singer, *Animal Liberation*, Op. Cit., p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

choose, we have to admit that they do not follow the boundary of our own species.”<sup>44</sup> Whatever decision we arrive at as far as human life is concerned is made from an attitude of human-centeredness. We value ourselves more than other animals simply because we think that they are inferior to us and their purpose of existing is for the service of man.

Singer asserts that we are in need of, “some middle position that would avoid *speciesism* but would not make the lives of the retarded and senile as cheap as the lives of pigs and dogs now are, or the lives of pigs and dogs so sacrosanct that we think it wrong to put them out of hopeless misery.”<sup>45</sup> Creating a balance between the way we see ourselves and the way we view animals is what need to adjust. Our negative attitude towards nonhuman animals has far-reaching consequences as far as our relationship with nonhuman animals is concerned. Nonhuman animals are not our enemies, but are independent beings with interests and occupying the same environment with us. We should not behave as though animals are strangers to us in terms of environmental occupation. “What we must do is to bring nonhuman animals within our sphere of rights and concern and cease to treat their lives as expendable for whatever trivial purposes we may have.”<sup>46</sup> Nonhuman animals are therefore not to be mishandled in our hands. We should carefully treat them with respect and sense of stewardship rather than exploiting them.

When it comes to the value of life, beings are valued on basis of the ability to reason. Singer does not see anything wrong with the issue of valuing life. That is why for him, “It is not arbitrary to hold that the life of a self-aware being, capable of abstract thought, of planning for the future, of complex acts of communication and so on, is more valuable than the life of a being without these capacities.”<sup>47</sup> Pain whether experienced by humans or nonhumans ought to be considered on the basis of sentience and not on the value of the entity. “The evil of pain, in itself unaffected by the other characteristics of the being who feels the pain, the value of life is affected by these other characteristics.”<sup>48</sup> The life of a human being is of higher value than that of nonhuman animals. We should not consider human life as more worth on the basis of our attitude but on the basis of the ability to reason and speak. Singer claims that “we should give the same respect to the lives of nonhuman animals as we give the lives of those humans at a similar mental level.”<sup>49</sup> The suggestion proposed by Singer aims at reducing suffering in nonhuman animals.

There are various ways in which we resemble animals, Aristotle writes:

In the great majority of animals, there are traces of psychical qualities or attitudes, which qualities are markedly differentiated in the case of human beings. We observe gentleness or fierceness, mildness or cross temper, courage or timidity, fear or confidence, high spirit or low cunning and with regard to intelligence, something equivalent to sagacity. Some of these qualities in a man, as compared with the corresponding qualities in animals differ only quantitatively.<sup>50</sup>

Human beings in this sense are not very different from other animals, they share many similarities. The only difference there is between man and other animals, is that man is more advanced in his own eyes than the other animals. Man, therefore, shows more or fewer characteristics similar to that of nonhuman animals. The gap between us and other animals has only been widened due to our attitude towards animals and nature at large. The human society has made us conceive that we are the center of nature and other things can only be if we are. Things that exist around us do not have intrinsic value not unless they are purposely designed for human use. Men give things their value depending on how useful they are to him.

### 4.3 Veganism safe guarding brutes lives

We have a responsibility of caring for animals as Singer puts it, “we should cease to eat animals.”<sup>51</sup> Changing from eating animal’s flesh to vegetarianism aims at conserving animals’ lives:

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House Press, 1941), p. 634.

<sup>51</sup> *Op. Cit.*, p. 159.

Ethical veganism is the personal rejection of the commodity status of non-human animals and the notion that animals have less value than do humans. Indeed veganism is the only position that is consistent with the recognition that for purposes of being treated as a thing, the lives of humans and non-humans are morally equivalent.<sup>52</sup>

Veganism is for the view that, non-humans as having *inherent value* are not *resources* for human beings to use. Animals' advocates who claim to favor animal rights and wish to abolish nonhuman animals' exploitation, but continue to eat or use animals for personal gain, are not different from those who claimed to be in favour of human rights but continued to own slaves.<sup>53</sup> One cannot fight for animals' rights and continue holding to exploitative activities that violate animals' rights. True animals' rights supporters ought to be vegetarians, since killing animals for meals purposes is one of the key ways of violating animals' rights. Animals should live, lives that are free from human abusive practices; we should care for all animals as part of nature which we belong to.

Animals both domestic and wild are purposefully part of the ecosystem. Human beings are not the ones who make the universe what it is but nature. We should not act as if without us been in place all the other things cannot be, but instead, we should value all that exists in the universe. The attitude of thinking that we are more important than other living things should only come in the sense that we have a duty of taking care of them. The capacity of self-awareness should make us beings having much responsibility of caring for the other animals and nature, rather than exploiting them.

Animals' lives many times may not be an issue of concern to most people. "The life of an animal is worth more than the benefits that people receive from activities that cause the animal harm."<sup>54</sup> The suffering caused by humans in nonhuman animals cannot, therefore, be considered as having any value in the animal lives. We should change the attitude of considering ourselves as the center of nature as if all that exists around us are just mere 'tools' of use. "Vegetarians who eat no meat and vegans who eat neither meat nor dairy products maintain that they live healthier, longer lives that have less of a negative impact on nonhuman animals and the environment."<sup>55</sup> The more friendly we are in our treatment of animals, the more friendly we are with our lives and the environment at large.

The human relationship with nonhuman animals is one that discriminates animals on the basis of anthropocentrism leading to pain and suffering in nonhuman animals. Abstaining from consuming animals' flesh cannot have any negative effects on our lives. There are many other sources of nutrition which can supply us with equivalent nutrients similar to those we get from the consumption of meat. We may not have thought that the flesh we devour is from an animal whose life has been brought to an end prematurely. Our attitude of feeding on animals is simply anthropocentric in nature because we always think that they are in place for our service.

## Conclusion

The chapter has enabled us to understand the various arguments concerning human life and how human life is seen to be different from that of nonhuman animals. The human-centered attitude seems to be a major problem which affects how human beings relate with other sentient beings. Though nonhuman animals' lives may not be considered equal to that of human beings, we have a responsibility of caring for their lives. Nonhuman animals are social beings with emotions and interests. We should not exploit animals on the pretext that we have natural dominion over them. Animals belong not to a different universe from the one we occupy hence we should interact with them well. Being human goes beyond how we relate with our fellow human beings but even how we relate with the whole diversity of both living things and the nonliving. Liberating animals may not be fully attained by arguing for equality alone, but through independently setting animals free from human exploitation, which calls for a change of human attitude towards nonhuman animals. The attitude of loving and caring for our lives should be extended to the nonhuman animals. Rights are not absolute, just like the way human right to life can be curtailed if it endangers the lives of other fellow human beings, too the right to life of nonhuman animals can be curtailed not when it threatens the lives of other nonhuman animals, but that of its steward, that is man. That is

<sup>52</sup> *Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare* (California: Greenwood Press, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Kevin Hile, *Animal Rights* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), p. 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.



why; those whom try bring nonhuman animals lives to sudden end, through practices like poaching should face the law.

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