

Past Exam Questions Relating to Animal Ethics

Ethics

2022: Q 20. Do animal rights stand in the way of our re-introducing predator species to ecosystems from which they have vanished in recent centuries? [Wild Animal Suffering]

2021: Q 22. 'The charge of speciesism depends for its power on a prior assumption of moral equality based on the capacity for suffering. But that capacity gets its distinctively moral significance from within an outlook that is essentially concerned with the attitudes humans bear to each other, and so cannot furnish the needed basis.' Is this a compelling argument? [Speciesism]

2020: Q 20. If you cannot save both, ought you to save a healthy adult pig loved by all or a healthy infant human being for whom no one feels any affection? [Speciesism, Moral Status]

2019: Q 18. 'If animal suffering mattered in the way that animal rights theorists believe it does, then we would be obligated to alleviate wild animal suffering.' Discuss. [Wild Animal Suffering]

2018: Q 19. 'Intuitively, the interests of a being who could have been a person count for more than those of a mere animal. And this is no mere prejudice.' Are these claims true? [Speciesism, Moral Status, Modal Personhood (Kagan)]

Practical Ethics

2022: Q 5. Many animals owe their existence to the dietary practices of humans. To what extent should this be a relevant consideration when judging the morality of humans' treatment of non-human animals? [Eating animals, 'logic of the larder']

2021: Q 8. If we were to coexist with a new generation of genetically enhanced human beings whose psychological capacities would exceed our own by almost as much as ours exceed those of chimpanzees, would they have a higher moral status than we have or would we be their moral equals? Does your answer have any implications for our moral relation to other animals? [Speciesism, moral status]

2020: Q 1. What, if anything, is wrong with such speciesism? [sic. Speciesism]

2019: Q 10. What, if anything, is the moral significance of the fact that an individual is a member of a species in which personhood is the norm? [Moral Status, modal personhood, speciesism]

2018: Q 3. 'The pig has a stronger interest than anyone in the demand for bacon. If all the world were Jewish, there would be no pigs at all.' (LESLIE STEPHEN) Discuss. [eating animals, logic of the larder]

Q 4. Do uncertainties about the grounds of moral status provide the basis for an argument for vegetarianism? Does your answer have implications for other issues in practical ethics? [moral status]

Lecture 1 What's wrong with speciesism?

Key terms:

-*Speciesism* as an ethical claim: It is justified to weigh the interests of different individuals differently according to their species.

-A *morally considerable* being is one that matters for its own sake – it can be wronged by our actions.

-Morally considerable beings have *interests* – there are things that can make their lives go better or worse.

-*Sentience* is the capacity to experience positive and negative states of consciousness, such as pleasure and pain.

-Speciesism is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species (Singer, 1975)

Singer's Argument

- (1) We should give equal consideration to like interests
- (2) If we should give equal consideration to like interests, then we should give equal consideration to the equal interests of humans and non-humans
- (3) Therefore, we should give equal consideration to the equal interests of humans and non-humans

-The *weight* (or strength) of an interest is determined by how much the satisfaction of that interest contributes to the welfare of the individual who holds it

Jaquet's argument

- (1) We should give equal consideration to the equal interests of entities that differ only in their biological properties.
- (2) If we should give equal consideration to the equal interests of entities that differ only in their biological properties, then we should give equal consideration to the equal interests of humans and non-humans.
- (3) Therefore, we should give equal consideration to the equal interests of humans and non-humans.

[Jaquet (2022)]