

IS PET-KEEPING A VIOLATION OF ANIMAL RIGHTS? A CONSEQUENTIALIST STANDPOINT

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Abstract

Humans have coexisted with animals for thousands of years, but the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries are when the word "pet" was first coined to mean domesticated animal. Pet ownership is for companionship or pleasure, comfort, amusement, and security. It is good for a child's sense of value, social skills, and cognitive development. There are ethical issues with keeping animals as pets. These problems mean that neglecting animals poses a threat to humans and animals. Pets keeping may be unpleasant but not a sufficient reason to enslave them. This essay contends that having pets is beneficial, but there is an urgent need to investigate moral issues that violate the rights of animals. The moral discussions of petting sparked assessments of the nature of "beingness" and the treatment of confined animals. This study makes the utilitarian case that, if pet ownership serves the interests of the greatest number of animals and their keeper, it should be permitted for the mutual worthy of humanity.

Keywords: Pet-keeping, morality, relationship, companionship, animal slavery.

Introduction

Animal slavery is the human 'invention' of domesticating animals, which predates their adoption for agriculture and experimental purpose. There may be strong evidence to argue that animal slavery is connected with pet ownership. Slavery is an institution that treated humans as a means to an end (Hauskeller, 2005). Aristotle's explanation of the 'natural law' underlying slavery proved most enduring, lasting in various guises up until the very end of slavery in the United States. The human domination over animals proved a compelling example for many of those who sought to understand slavery (Jacoby, 2022).

The name "teleology" comes from the ancient Greek word "telelos, (rights)" which means "an end, fulfillment and completion are intrinsically inherent of all beings. A right is the reason to checkmate an action or something happens or is done (Brennan, 2002). Animal right is privilege intended to achieve beingness (i.e., end), and practical deliberation entails outlining the specific procedures required to do so (Brennan, 2002). An agent's total telos, here interpreted as their ultimate goal and fundamental rights summum bonum (the "highest good"), can also be seen as the goal of their entire life, generally identified in antiquity as *the imonia (happiness)* (happiness). Violating the rights of animal has led to pain and avoiding the satisfaction of *beingness* (Rollin, 2012).

The word pet is a relatively recent invention dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Humans have lived with animals for much longer—dogs have been domesticated for at least 30,000 years (Matthew, 2017). Pet ownership is a prevalent

custom with a long tradition. More than half of the world's population is thought to live with one or more pets in their homes and lives. For instance, it has been known to keep dogs as pets for at least 15,000 years. However, historical pet-keeping customs frequently diverge from popular modern beliefs. The term "pet" originally meant "favorite," and it was frequently used to describe either a person (such as a teacher's pet) or an object of love (such as a pet project) (Jalongo, 2023). Emmaline maintains that dogs were the first animals domesticated, although the history of animal domestication is complex and has different narratives. 'Pet keeping has transformed animal and human lives in many parts of the world. This revolution has transformed many family homes, and it has played important roles in family life: befriending the lonely, chumming with children, and even intervening between husband and wife (Jane and Julie-Marie, 2023). Pet keeping could be peaceful or chaotic; the cohabitation of domestic space between humans and animals has led to ethical issues. However, it is obvious that much damage has been done to the captured wild pets, such as changes in habitat, cognitive enhancement, widespread plucking of birds, and many others (Jane and Julie-Marie, 2023). Animal cruelty evokes moral feelings that will be argued from a consequentialist standpoint (Emmaline, n.d.; Leslie, 2004).

In Africa, pet keeping has resulted in animal cruelty since prehistoric times. Hunter-gatherers have numerous pets, such as dogs, and they often take them to the forest or wilderness, where they teach them the act of hunting. Dogs were thought to understand human and animal movements and were typically kept for the joy they could bring to their owners or children (Jennifer et al., 2022). While hunting, dogs suffered and died in the wilderness; they were often traded as pets and flog to urbanites who wanted a vain companionship (Jane and Julie-Marie, 2023).

The domestication of animals such as horses, dogs, and cats could help establish a symbiotic relationship between their owners and the animals, but they took up space in homes and represented a potential source of disorder: noise, smells, and so on (Britannica, 2023). Many dogs, whether those of the working classes or the middle classes, therefore slept outside in kennels, but new suburban homes had more space for pets (although dogs were often chained up in gardens) (Jennifer et al., 2022). Pet-keeping shows that the symbiotic relationship between a pet and its owner may not be the case. Instead, the doctrine of human supremacy over animals shows that human relationships with animals have often been ideologically impossible (Leslie, 2004). The argument that humans are fundamentally superior to animals is that dominance amounts to slavery. Aristotle's "explanation of the 'natural law' underlying slavery proved most enduring, lasting in various guises up until the very end of slavery in the United States. The human domination over domestic animals proved a compelling example for many of those who sought to understand slavery."(Jacoby, K. (2022)) The treatment of animals as lesser beings is unethical (Darya, 2021).

Inter-species attachments have occurred involving human intervention, such as in households, zoos, and wildlife parks in which the animals were provisioned (Herzog, 2014). In settings with human agency (such as houses, zoos, and wildlife parks), attachments between non-human animals of various species are surprisingly frequent. But in nature, interspecies animal friendships that are comparable to human pet

ownership are either extremely uncommon or nonexistent (Herzog, 2014). Why did pet ownership only develop in *Homo sapiens*? Countries may have changed their legal status concerning animals. For instance, in "2015, the government of New Zealand recognized animals as sentient beings, in effect declaring them no longer property" (Linda, 2017). We experience "moral schizophrenia" when it comes to our ethical and legal responsibilities to nonhuman animals. We contend that it is morally wrong to subject animals to "unnecessary" suffering and that animals have morally important interests in avoiding suffering. The vast majority of the pain, suffering, and death that we inflict on animals cannot be seen as necessary in any sense, despite the fact that we have laws that ostensibly reflect these moral views. Because of our morally schizophrenic relationship to the position of animals as property, animal suffering will, in practice, be justified anytime it serves the interests of human property owners (Francione, 2004). This could be morally problematic for animals as well as people. Animals may be considered a part of a family or a best friend that wouldn't be sold for a million dollars (Linda, 2017; Foley, 1999). In some cases, cross-species interactions or relationships could be best facilitated by professional animal trainers, but there may be no convincing evidence that non-human animals are capable of becoming attached to members of other species. This study is concerned with the question, "Is pet-keeping a violation of animals' telos?"

The Ethical Issue of Taming Animals

Pet Keeping is one of the contemporary discussions in moral philosophy, bioethics, and legal philosophy. Philosophers are developing philosophical literature on animal **ethics**, **the use of animals**, and the ethical **dilemma** of confined animals by proposing acceptable ethical theories that would enhance the relationship between **animals** and their owners. Ethics is the study of moral values. Ethics deals with standards or principles for the evaluation of human actions as right or wrong (Mark, 2023). Conduct means "those actions that are freely taken or that are seen to spring from deliberate choices made by free moral agents." It justifies how people ought to make moral and immoral decisions (Beane 2003). It focuses on behaviors based on a moral compass or values and society's shared values, laws, or traditions (Monday, 2020). Ethics is the study of morality. It studies moral principles that should guide human conduct. Ethics deals with what ought to be done or not done and the right actions that humans should follow (Mark, 2023). The question is: does pet keeping amount to a violation of animal rights? Pets are members of the family where they are kept. Humans must treat them with care, love, and respect. Modern pet keeping can be characterized by the custody of animals for no other reason than to be companions (Jennifer et al., 2022). But is the act of petting in the best interest of the animal or its owner? This question has sparked discussion in recent times about the ownership law and how animals are seen as the owner's personal property, just like other tangible property like a car or furniture.

Animals should not be used for factory farming and testing labs; these are forms of animal abuse. Animal petting violated their telos. Animals for games, 'puppy farm, and the act of establishing new behavioral patterns for animals violates their telos (Bernard, 2019). In the worst-case scenario, animals are abused through hoarding, dog fighting, cockfighting, and rings (Ray, 2020). Jennifer et al. (2022) maintain that "humans have

dominated the living environment and their pets, with approaches varying between extremes of dominance and affection, love and abuse, cruelty and kindness." In some cases, keeping animals may be difficult because caring for their physical and psychological needs may violate their telos (Ray, n.d.). Also, the culture of sentiment is characterized by animal cruelty and dominance (Jennifer et al., 2022). Cruelty toward animals is ethically wrong. There may be fewer extreme cases of animal cruelty in keeping pets, but we must consider the fact that "pets are creatures with whom we share a world, and we rejoice in their companionship; you don't have to anthropomorphize to recognize that the feelings are returned. Let us be close and cherish each other always" (Doris, 2018). Keeping pets for companionship is a conduit of affection, which transforms human ends but not in the way that laboratory animals or farm animals do (Spencer et al., 2006). One could argue that millions of cats and dogs are killed in shelters every year. Bernard (2019) argues that, as St. "Thomas Aquinas teaches, animals were not perceived as enjoying genuine moral status. At best, it was obligatory not to treat them cruelly, as they sufficiently resembled humans so that gratuitous abusive treatment of them was likely to cause harm.

Some animals have been bred to the pleasure of their owners; sometimes they are given tasks to the extent they suffer pain and discomfort. Animal tasking and over-breeding would expose them to a greater risk of genetic defects or disease, leading to an increase in "zoonotic diseases" and the spread of zoonotic diseases such as the coronavirus (COVID-19)". (Monday, 2020) Although improvements in medical and veterinary sciences have lowered the risk of zoonoses, or diseases transmitted between animals and humans, zoonotic infections continue to threaten human populations. Jennifer et al. (2022) maintain that the excruciating ordeal of pet keeping involves the manipulation of animals' bodies, behaviors, and emotional lives. For centuries, the confinement of animal bodies such as dogs, horses, and rabbits has been shaped to suit human fashions, conditions, and fancies. This, of course, has led to the violation of animals' telos and physical harm (Shutter, 2019).

Moral Arguments on Animal Rights

"Rights" is to fully express natural behavior, to be free without confinement, to live lives to the fullest, to enjoy their native environment, and to follow natural instincts (Regan, 2013). These instincts are the best possible world for animals. Animal rights are moral principles grounded in the belief that non-human animals deserve the ability to wish as they wish without being subjected to the desires of human beings. At the core of animal rights is respect for animals, which means the total abolition of the use of animals in science, the total dissolution of commercial agriculture and culture, and the total elimination of commercial and sport hunting. (Regan, 2013) There may be many worlds, but respect for animals does not mean keeping them in private homes where their owners can rarely provide the proper conditions for keeping animals. Exotic pet keeping should be avoided, such as work experimentation; it leads to animal cruelty (Animals, n-d). Domesticated dogs and cats must be given the best care possible because they cannot survive "freely" in our concrete jungles. Adopting animals from shelters or saving them from a dangerous existence on the streets means dedicating time, money, and love to their

patience to make them significant because they are dependent on their keeper for survival (Quotes, 2012). The belief in the practice of pet keeping is to engage in **animal welfare** and “protection against suffering.” Any efforts to prevent suffering must also accept the "right" of pets to express their intrinsic natural behavior. Dogs kept in houses for most of the day are being kept in an unnatural environment. So are rabbits kept in hutches and guinea pigs or birds kept in cages? These conditions infringe on the animals' telos (Sunstein & Nussbaum, 2004). Animal experimentation infringes on it telos, autonomy and it should be drastically reduced although animal experimentation is for clinical study is necessary but not for anthropocentrism (Benjamin, 2020).

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a moral theory that is associated with Jeremy Bentham (1747–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). Utilitarianism holds that morality promotes actions that advance the happiness or pleasure of the greatest number of people (Carla, 2022). The morally best action will bring about the greatest amount of pleasure and avoid the pain of the greatest number of people (Monday, 2018). Utilitarianism determines the right from wrong of pet keeping by focusing on outcomes, or consequentialism. The study endorses utilitarianism as the rationale for pet keeping. Arguments in support of utilitarianism for pet keeping have received relatively little sustained attention in the philosophical literature. Pet keeping underlies many widely held beliefs about zoos, pet ownership, scientific research on animal and human subjects, and agriculture, although the idea of pet keeping is rigorous with several commitments. In relation to the view that humans keeping animals constitutes an ethical dilemma, utilitarianism is intuitively plausible for animal petting, but it may alter animals' rights (Killoren & Streiffer, 2020). This idea could be widely believed to be incompatible with the utilitarian approach. The best ethical theory for keeping animals is to overturn the conventional wisdom and maintain that utilitarianism has moral significance for petting animals (Monday, 2020). To strengthen utilitarian principles, we establish a coherent, robust, and intuitively appealing account of the moral significance of ethical theory (Killoren & Streiffer, 2020). The core of this theory is that whether pet ownership is morally right or wrong depends on the effects it produces. More specifically, the only effects of pet ownership that are relevant are the good and bad results that they produce (Encyclopedia, n.d.). Morally, pet keeping is best if it brings about the greatest amount of pleasure or happiness to the greatest number of pets and their keepers, but sentient **animals** should count for something in our **ethical** decision. Although petting animals could be equivalent to slavery because they are incarcerated in their telos. Monday, (2020), utilitarianism opposes unhappiness or harm. We maintain that animal cruelty is a violation of animal telos when applied, and utilitarianism would aim for the betterment or welfare of animals and their keepers without violating their telos. The knowledge of animals in housing must be reassessed because they have rights and should not be treated as the property of individuals (Leslie, 2004). Rollin (2016) argues that animals have rights that are inherent in their nature "unique set of traits and powers that make the animal what it is—the 'bigness' of the pig, the 'dogness' of the dog—make the animal what it is. The telos of animals must be understood in terms being or nature. Utilitarianism is important in pet ownership because

it evaluates actions based on consequences, not motivation. Although this philosophy has a problem with accounting values, which justify rights or wrongs, if utilitarianism is a true philosophy, then the unethical execution of animals is morally right (Monday, 2020). When it is advantageous to human property owners, animal suffering will be considered a practical matter and required. Animals can no longer be used as resources for humans if we take animal interests seriously. This does not imply that we must provide animals with the same rights as people or that, in cases of actual conflict, we cannot put human interests ahead of animal interests. Instead, we must acknowledge that animals only have one right—the right to not be treated like property—and that utilizing animals in ways that we never use humans does not give rise to human-animal conflicts (Francione, 2004). Animals will always remain nothing more than things that lack any morally relevant interests as long as they are considered to be human property, making it impossible for the concept of equal regard to apply to them (just as it could not apply to slaves). The hypothesis put forth is applicable to any sentient animal and does not call for any new cognitive traits in animals. (Francione, 2004). We argue that for utilitarianism to hold, other possible consequences must be considered in the context of animals. For instance, animal welfare must be considered otherwise. It sets a bad precedent that weakens the legal and ethical systems.

Conclusion

Pet keeping is good if the well-being of pets and their keepers is justified from a utility or consequential standpoint. The paper argues that pet keeping would be beneficial rather than worsening the telos of animals in confinement. Furthermore, the ability to feel pain may not be sufficient ground for a non-sentient being to obtain moral status. What is necessary for moral status is what happens as the consequence of an action, whether negative or positive. Our study maintains that moral agency must be taken into account in pet keeping to avoid repudiation of human-animal dignity. The paper concludes that utilitarianism cannot be overruled in debates on pet keeping because the theory is geared towards the common good of the greatest number of pets and their keepers.

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