

TOWARDS AN EXISTENTIAL ETHIC OF LIFE:  
THE OTHER, FREEDOM, AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

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TOWARDS AN EXISTENTIAL ETHIC OF LIFE:  
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## **I. WHY ANIMALS AND WHY EXISTENTIALISM?**

It is often assumed that existentialism has no room for an ethic. It is also generally accepted from the existential perspective that there is no need to consider any being outside of the human variety into any ethical evaluation of a situation. In this thesis I will argue that not only is it possible to have an existential ethic, but that an existential ethic can, and should, include non-human animals.

It is always helpful in any work to define the overall problem under consideration, as well as the specific questions that will be on the table. The central issue, in a nutshell, is the suffering and misuse of non-human animal life. The questions that seem to naturally follow are along the line of “why is this happening, and is the continuation of the past and present situations justified”? And if not, then how can the problem be rectified? While many other questions and concerns will arise as this work unfolds, the ones just listed are at the heart of the overall debate.

The larger questions at play here have to do with why past theories start with an exclusionary attitude toward non-humans and if that position is a valid one to begin from. There is also an overwhelming need to look critically at the ethical systems that are part of those decisions and ask whether or not the criteria that are used have any sort of consistency or validity when applied to human and non-human life. If they don't, then what are the implications of that failure? And finally, what would an ethic that begins from inclusion, one in which exclusion must be argued for, look like? One of the central

claims of this thesis will be that the definitions and criteria for membership in the moral community have been arbitrary. In a critical error they have excluded both humans and non-humans. They also fail to acknowledge the interdependency of humans on the non-human realm and its members.

Part of the reason that animal suffering is not an issue to most is arguably a philosophical history that either denies it is happening, or reasons that it does not matter. Philosophers have been looking at animal ethics for hundreds of years, but always with the starting point of automatic inclusion for humans and exclusion for non-human animals. The arguments being advanced typically begin by laying out criteria that all beings must have to be considered a moral agent. A being or set of beings, which are always human or some sub-set thereof, seem to earn membership in the group. If you are not part of the group, then you get no consideration in moral issues. You don't get a status that would gain you protection against mistreatment, or what is sometimes worse, indifference. You have no voice in ethical matters. This is the situation animals have typically found themselves in.

There are two different forms of arbitrariness going on in this scenario. The first involves the starting positions for the different groups involved in the question. It would seem logical that all beings in question would initially be in the same category, and then there would need to be an argument created to move them into another group. All things involved in the initial question are already in a group; those things that are alive. It makes sense for that shared trait to be the starting point. What is actually happening in most arguments is quite the opposite. There is a serious discrepancy in where humans place themselves in the initial posing of an answer that is supposed to be considering more than



just human existence, as well as being problematic because humans are the judge for all species. There is an element of question-begging involved in including human centered traits in the answer.

Historically we know that when humans are developing an ethical theory they begin by citing qualities that are human centered as the sign of a being that has moral worth. Examples of this are reason, or decision making ability. While these theorists seem to be arguing from exclusion to inclusion, they in fact are not. The baseline traits being considered already encompass that set of things that are human. Those same ethical theories then begin with the opposite starting place for animals. We hold them up to characteristics that we have already decided we possess and do indeed value, and then we withhold membership when we find them lacking those abilities. Peter Singer noted in *Animal Liberation* that in a sense we have stacked the cards in our own favor and this allows humans to still see non-humans as having always been outside our circle and possessing no qualities that should grant them access.

This viewpoint further fails in at least one important aspect. Humans are not the only species on the planet, nor are we the only one needed to maintain the integrity of those things that help keep us alive. All beings play some sort of role in the continuation of an earth that is hospitable to life. We as humans, also play a particular role in the systems that keep life happening and growing. This used to be considered merely an ethical stance to support what is labeled as the tree hugging mentality, but in the last fifty years science has proven the interdependency of bio-systems on earth. One example of this can be seen in the relationship between rainforest depletion, global warming, and air quality. (Gibbs & Herold)

The second issue concerns the arbitrariness of the very qualities upon which exclusion has been based. A good example of this type of problem would be the primacy reason has been given in the debate. In the past, reason tended to be the qualifier that was necessary in being considered a moral agent. Arguments were spun around the idea that animals lacked reason, so therefore we owed them no thought when it came to our treatment of them. Either they were judged as beasts unable to think or feel past each individual moment, or they could not make choices related to will that moved them to do whatever the right thing would be. Whatever the argument was, there was a common bond of using what was seen as a lack of reasoning capacity to exclude certain beings from the moral landscape.

When looking at the scope of just human life this is hugely problematic. It is hard to set a baseline standard for reason in humans. There are different types of reason, as well as different levels. For instance, a person can write volumes of great fiction and not be able to grasp basic geometry. The varieties of autism spectrum disorders also highlight this example. Initially persons with this disorder were judged be lacking basic reasoning skills like evaluation. Research has shown that the exact opposite is true in a great many cases. There is actually a very high form of reasoning going on. (Morsani and Holyoak)

The reverse of this first argument concerns the levels of reasoning we see in animals. When you take the things that are usually touted as signs of reason, and look for them, they are evident in the animal world. Some of these signposts of reason are ability to locate and use tools, language, and also decision making. Chimps and other animals use tools to procure food. (Clem) Some primates can learn sign language. (Kosseff) This involves complex language and visual centers. When given a choice dogs will stay away

from plants that have already made them sick. To do so the animal has to recall the previous experience and then make a choice, however low level, to not eat the offending food.

The implications of all of this are that while humans claim to have found distinct and constant criteria that animals do not possess, we have failed in both areas. There is not really a consistent, measurable standard of reason within humanity and lower levels of human reasoning do appear in animals.

A theory of inclusion successfully addresses all of these issues. It avoids the hidden problem of circular reason when humans start with inclusion for themselves by way of human-centered traits, and exclusion for everything else. Inclusion as a beginning point also recognizes the dependency of all systems on each other. It sees all life as a member of the moral community in the overall scheme of the natural world. It can be argued that humans are actually attempting to protect their lives by putting themselves at the center of the moral circle. The embracing of reason or will are extensions of a need to continue human existence. But what makes that human pursuit of life more worthy of moral consideration than a non-human life?

Inclusion would say nothing in our initial positions or makeup. It forces an argument to be produced specific to the situation before the moral membership of any living thing is taken away from it. It also looks at having life as being the only basic thing that is required as far as what is needed to be included in an ethical landscape. This does not mean there is never a reason to exclude a form of life from the moral landscape, only that one must argue successfully to do so. Arbitrariness by way of criteria is eliminated.

Every being that is alive at least has a stake in all moral decisions that impact it in any way.

Existentialism seems like a natural fit for an inclusive theory of animal ethics. This might seem surprising; existentialism is seen as a very exclusionary theory because it argues for the subjective point of view as far as what constitutes being and purpose. We all create ourselves and our experience and no project is *a priori* more important than any others. At its heart existentialism looks at the problems that come from existence. Animals have these as well. They are concerned with continuing their existence once it begins. They seek food when they are undernourished, they look for shelter in threatening conditions, and they pursue their own continuation. Animals have made an existential project of themselves in similar ways to humans. Hans Jonas, a biologist had recognized something along these lines in his work. He understood that the facts of life such as the need to eat and the fact everything dies is common to all living things. (Rubenstein 165)

Animals even have a form of choice at times. This does not boil down to the same radical freedom posed by Sartre, nor does it entail the type of conscious anxiety and nausea that Kierkegaard cites, but it is indeed an existential pursuit. The work of Simone de Beauvoir on an existential ethic and its relationship to intersubjectivity is particularly applicable to the case for animals.

The format this work will take in making the case for an existential animal ethic will be to first look at a brief history of human-centric animal ethics. The second step will be to take a deeper look at exactly why existentialism seems contrary to ethics by way of examining some concepts at its heart. Examining some of the theories of Jean Paul Sartre will be essential to that understanding. I will also argue these concepts can be extended

to animals. The next part of arguing for an existential animal ethic will take us to the work of Simone de Beauvoir. I will argue that animals are an essential part of the scope of intersubjectivity, and are essential to the completion of human existential projects. And finally we will see exactly where this takes us in terms of weighing questions of animal fairness and treatment.

## II. A BRIEF HISTORY

As we begin to move forward in answering the questions that have been posed and outlined, it would seem the first place to start in addressing them, as well as arriving at an answer to them, would be in the history of animal ethics.

The first two historical arguments to be examined that use reason as a foundation are considered indirect theories of animal ethics. They rely on the idea that animals are not of moral importance themselves, so we owe them no direct consideration, but what we do to them may say something about us. If an animal does happen to figure into the ethical picture, it is only in relation to humans. The question is not whether mistreatment of an animal is ethically correct, but whether and in what ways the action affects humans. If I kick a dog in the head, it is not the dog that is of concern. The ethical consideration is given to the owner of the dog who may be upset by the injury, the people around who saw it and might be unhappy, and me because I am evidently a morally corrupt person.

The second set of arguments that will be looked at focus on direct theories. This means the animal itself is held to be of moral value regardless of its connection to people. While this type of argument does get the animal considered on its own ground, so to speak, does it still fill in the gaps so that all animals are included? In this scenario if a dog is kicked, it is not really the owner, or the crowd, or even the person who did the kicking that is at the center of the dilemma, it is the animal who suffered. These arguments do not hold reason at the center, but they still run into the problem of being arbitrary and

therefore exclude certain forms of animal life. I will argue that they start from the same notion that humans are the center of the moral community and others are excluded unless sufficient argument for status can be provided.

René Descartes developed an ethical stance on animals as part of his ontological work. His theory of animals as machines held quite a bit of influence over animal ethical theories for a very long time. While there is a sort of groundbreaking move in even developing such a theory given what had come previously, in the end Descartes was the first to fall into the traps of exclusion and arbitrariness.

In *Animals as Automata* Descartes outlines his view that all animals are automata, or machines. They are moving substance with no thinking substance working in the background. By this he meant machines that were essentially physical bodies without souls. To Descartes the soul was equated with the mind, and the mind in turn, to reason. Using empirical observation as his foundation he determined that animals do not have reason. He based this on a seeming lack of language.

Descartes draws a distinct line between human and animal communication based on two principles. He roots the initial part of his theory of a lack of animal language in the idea that all animals only communicate out of what he called passion. Passion in this instance seems to be about instinct or primal drives such as the basic bodily needs like food and water. He lays out a Pavlovian idea of conditioning towards needs in which he describes a bird as only talking for its Mistress because it associates food with the action of repeating sounds. (Animals 285) The second principle is that while humans communicate out of passion as well, we are also capable of types of verbal interaction

that convey things that are not only grounded in instinctive need and we can do so in an adaptive way.

The second criterion involving language is that humans not only have abstract communication, we can use language in a conversational way. The bird in the earlier example may be able to convey what it wants, but what if his owner did not have its typical food? Would the bird be able to express that anything else would be fine? Descartes would say no. Only humans have the ability to particularly adapt language during the course of use to reflect changing thoughts or needs. We have the extra capacity to express through spoken language abstract theory, as well as particular or mundane topics that may be disconnected from any sense of instinct. We can run the gamut from quantum mechanics to gossip about coworkers.

The implications of Descartes' ideas were far-reaching. In classifying animals as machines he had denied them the ability to think or to possess a soul. He made the ethical leap that to be without that immaterial thinking substance was to be without the ability to suffer. In short he argued that animals do not experience pain in any way that matters. In the Cartesian schema when you kick a dog and it yelps, this is just a reflexive response to stimuli in the same way that one's knee jerks when a doctor taps it with a rubber mallet. From this point of view animals have no experience we need to consider and therefore no interests that are relevant to any ethical question.

We now find problems with this aspect of Cartesian theory. Although Descartes based his theory of animal consciousness on empirical observation of his particular surroundings, he commits the fallacy of unwarranted generalization. It is not sound to extrapolate to all animals' things he observed in varying types of farm animals in



enlightenment-era Europe. If we consider the number of animal species on the planet along with the amount of variation of all life, it seems unsound to base a judgment that affects all of them on a handful of species. To understand this better let's take a look at the animals in the family *Canidae*.

Both domesticated dogs and wolves belong to this family, and while they seem similar, they are very different. A domesticated dog barks for a variety of reasons. Wolves do not bark. They howl, and they growl, but they do not bark. If we used Descartes' method and observed a dog barking, we might also assume wolves bark because they are similar in appearance, as well as being grouped into the same biological family. If we made that assumption we would be making the same generalization fallacy Descartes did. Not only did Descartes unfairly assign characteristics to the entire animal population, he is guilty of that same human centered thinking that creates an unfair bias as far as his theorizing about communication and language in animals.

What Descartes did not recognize was the feasibility of these things existing outside of spoken human language. Animals do communicate with each other for a variety of reasons. Dogs will bark warnings to each other, as well as use tail wags and ear placement to communicate emotion and intention of action in response. When a dog lowers its tail and ears this is usually a sign that it is not comfortable. The dog will display this to both other dogs and to humans as a warning. At this point I have stated some facts and made an argument for animal communication being different than the human variety, but what about Descartes' idea that they are not capable of language?

We can also see through modern linguistics and science that not only do they have their own ways to communicate, some are completely capable of learning human

language, and can go so far as to teach human language to other animals. The best-known example of this is Koko the gorilla. She is capable of adaptive conversation in which she expresses both thought and feelings that are entirely hers. She knows over a thousand human ASL words and has successfully taught some of them to other gorillas. (“Learn to Sign With Koko”)

Having noted some flaws in the Cartesian argument, it is time to take a closer look at how he falls prey to the criticisms raised at the beginning of this work. Descartes is one of the philosophers who builds his theory on the arbitrary quality of reason. To get to reason, though, he uses language-use as the criterion of reasoning ability. The first problem is that in using language and recognizing only the human form of it as a valid expression of reason, he is beginning his theory from the place of human-centered exclusion. As discussed earlier, this means things without that trait are already excluded, while the group with it gets automatic inclusion, so there is a circularity in methodology. He is presuming what he wants to prove. Descartes’ use of language also has an additional arbitrary quality to it.

Human language does not just occur through words. There is a wide variation that runs the gamut from spoken words, to patterned sounds, as well as body movements. There are African click languages that use a variety of throat sounds and soft palate/tongue clicking sounds. As mentioned earlier ASL also uses non-verbal and therefore non-typical ways to communicate. It would be worthy at this point to mention that Descartes did somewhat recognize the gestures made by non-speaking humans as an attempt to communicate, and as a sign of reasoning capability. This too demonstrates a

circular reasoning process because he did not recognize non-verbal gestures from animals as being signs of reason.

When you look at the qualities that constitute communication, as well as the methods by which it is expressed, then there seems to be less distance between a dog wagging its tail to communicate happiness and a human actually saying “I am happy” than Descartes proposes. Given all this, taking away a being’s membership in the community of moral consideration seems as random as ruling out other beings who speak languages that have clicks or rely on non-verbal communication.

Another major analysis of whether or not animals are members of the moral community was done by Immanuel Kant. While stepping away from Descartes and the idea of animals as machines without communication or a meaningful sense of pain, Kant did indeed wind up back at reason as his ultimate criterion in measuring moral status. By making this move he, like Descartes, fails to rise above the charge that his theory is also based on an arbitrary quality that is human-centered from the beginning, and therefore already exclusionary.

Kant argued that animals are undoubtedly a part of our experience as humans and our growth process, but not actual moral agents. They are not capable of the type of autonomy that Kant considered necessary to participate within the moral sphere, so therefore we owe them no consideration in moral matters. An animal can never really be at the center of an ethical question in its own right, but exists only in terms of its relationship to humans. An animal is never the subject, or agent, but is only an object. An explanation of certain aspects of deontology will help to better understand what Kant was arguing for in relation to animals.

The aspect of Kantian theory that needs to be understood here for the purposes of animal ethics is the different types of duties and the implications that arise from them. His overall argument was that to act in the morally right way was to act from a sense of duty and with a good will. We can get a sense of what our duty may be by applying the different formulations of the Categorical Imperative (CI) to our ethical questions. In the first formulation he asks us to come up with a law or maxim that we could consistently apply to all people in if they were in the same circumstances as we find ourselves in. If we are asked to lie we must decide whether it would be ok for all persons in our situation to lie as well. Most likely the answer would be no one should lie because then the value of the truth, and therefore trust, is destroyed. We can no longer depend on hearing it and we trust would become difficult to maintain. (*Metaphysics of Morals*)

One's duty is then seen as a sort of respect for the moral answer we are given when we use the CI. To follow our duty is to make a conscious choice to follow the maxim that is generated, to make it an expression of our moral selves. (*Metaphysics of Morals*) Our duties can also be broken into different categories: direct and indirect, as well as perfect and imperfect. Each of these has a part to play in Kant's overall stance on animal ethics.

Direct duties are what we owe other moral agents. (*Metaphysics of Morals*) The foundational point to be understood here is what constitutes a moral agent. Good will is one of the keys to moral agency in Kantian theory. To will in this case is to choose one action in particular over another for the right moral reasons, and then to follow that option through. A moral agent is one who can make a choice between options and then

turn that into an intentional action or stance. The question then becomes exactly what tools do we have to analyze the options in front of us and make the choice needed?

In order to make the evaluation that is called upon we need reason. So a deeper view of the moral agent shows us that a moral agent is one who uses reason to choose the correct ethical path that has been made evident by the CI. If they do not have the reasoning capacities to make this choice, then they do not have moral agency. This leaves out children, persons with mental disabilities, the elderly in some instances, and most, if not all, animals. Now that we have seen that Kant rules out non-human animals as moral agents, what place do they have, and what considerations come along with that place?

The concept of perfect duty comes from the first formulation of the CI. As stated earlier this version asks us for a maxim we can universalize. Perfect duties are generally those that carry real world consequences when not met. They also usually involve our interactions with other rational agents. The ethical prohibitions against stealing or murdering that exist in most parts of the world are examples of the universalization this type of duty. They are things we may not do in reference to the maxim generated by the CI. In *Moral Self-Regard: Duties to Oneself in Kant's Moral Theory* Lara Denis describes perfect duties in agents as “What they may *not* will if they want their maxims to be consistent with the law.” (36)

The other type of duty generated by the first version of the CI is that of the imperfect kind. These are still choices based in reason that occur in the moral realm, but they are about the individual, so there is no general consequence for not living up to this type of duty. These are also things that do not usually have an end point. It might help to see them as moral obligations that each of us has to ourselves to preserve our status as

rational agents and to refine our ability to interpret the different formulations of the CI. They are our duties to ourselves. (*Moral Self Regard*) The obligation to be good to one's body since it is the only one you have could be seen as this type of duty. At this point the discussion can turn back to exactly what an indirect obligation is, and how that fits into Kantian animal ethics.

Indirect obligations are those types of duties owed to things that are not part of the moral community, but are part of our lives, such as those children, people with mental incapacities, or animals. These obligations are dependent on the relationship the non-member has with a member. Our duty to them is by way of the human that they are attached to, either as family, friend, or animal. If we hurt them, particularly in the case of animals, the damage has really been done to the moral agent who is in charge of them or to ourselves.

If you abuse or kill an animal that has an owner you have wronged that person, not the animal, because you have either damaged or destroyed a resource that belonged to a member of the moral community. Animals were seen as tools in Kantian theory. They are a plentiful natural resource in the first place. Secondly, humans breed them, or make them, much in the same way we make tools. Creating them in this way seems to give us a right to use them as we see fit, Kant argued. "Inasmuch as crops (for example, potatoes) and domestic animals are products of human labor, at least as far as their quantity is concerned, we may say that they can be used, consumed, and destroyed (killed). (Animals May be Used 79) This aspect of animal cruelty was not what Kant considered to be the most important.

Kant believed that in harming an animal you are failing to fulfill an imperfect duty to yourself, that of developing compassion. Kant speaks of someone shooting his dog as an example. "If a man shoots his dog because the animal is no longer capable of service, he does not fail in his duty to the dog, for the dog cannot judge, but his act is inhuman and damages in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind." (Duties 126) Needless abuse is a negation of one's duty to oneself, and by extrapolation, to other humans. We all need compassion in our dealings with our fellow man. Animals give us chances to develop this trait through responsible treatment of them. The other side of that coin is that abusing animals hardens our hearts and damages our sense of compassion.

Now that Kant's position has been explained it is time to see exactly where it fails to overcome the arguments that have been raised against it. Kant is indeed vulnerable to the charge of arbitrariness by way of reason, and much like Descartes, it seems he has built one arbitrary quality on top of another. To know what an appropriate ethical decision is, we are to look at the CI, and then act based on the direction it gives us.

The problem is that the CI can sometimes give no answer firmly grounded in reason. Let's suppose we have the classic philosophical scenario of a burning building with a baby in it. If there is one person standing there and they use the first version of the CI to formulate a maxim along the lines of "Should all persons in my situation go inside and try to save the baby" the answer seems to be that yes, they should try to save the baby because the alternative would be a maxim that allows all of humanity to ignore those who are in a similar life and death scenario. But how will the situation change if you are the only person standing outside of the building, but you are also the only means of support

and care for your own children? Following the initial maxim would lead to your children having no one to care for them. Would a world in which children are orphaned in this manner anytime there was this type of ethical conflict be one we would find acceptable either? The person in front of the building has no clear choice based in reason or a good will. Much like the beings involved in them, ethical situations tend to be highly individualized, as are the responses to them.

There is also another issue in Kant that reflects the problem of ignoring dependent systems and the effect members have on one another. As was stated earlier Kant says that to injure an animal does not really harm the animal in a moral way, it harms the people associated with them. Kant does recognize the pain that the animal feels as being a reality, but maintains that it is less meaningful solely based on the animals lack of moral status. He is essentially arguing that although a human harming an animal does injure both the human and the animal in some way, what the animal experiences is of no importance. It seems illogical to say that I can do something that is considered bad, but at the same time that bad action means nothing as far as the being it was perpetrated on.

On one level this ignores the idea of cause and effect, on another it is a choice to not see that in any interaction whatever is occurring is happening to both parties simultaneously. Let's say someone is playing with a baby and then suddenly kicks the ball in a mean way at the baby, whose parents are nowhere to be found. When the ball is kicked into the air and it hits the baby people do not typically make appeals to the idea that the baby is not a moral agent so it did not really matter. The ball kicker would also be judged harshly by the moral community if she tried to claim kicking the ball did indeed represent a certain abhorrent trait in her own moral character, but should amount to a "no



harm, no foul” type of situation for the baby. The suitable response for most would actually be the one that recognizes the injury to the baby, as well as the bad behavior of the kicker. Both parties get equal consideration, and there is an acknowledgement of exactly how the kicker affected the baby.

While Kantian theory did make a step forward in acknowledging animals’ experience to a degree, it still fails to give them any sort of independent moral ground to stand on. Kant was not the last deontologist to attempt to apply his theory to animal ethics. Tom Regan has gone a long way in his effort to gain an ethical status for animals by shifting the focus of membership in the moral community away from rational agency and towards a more comprehensive idea of individual non-human beings whose lives matters to them.

Although Regan’s position sounds inclusive and does actively seek to reduce the arbitrariness of Kant, Regan has not given this status to any being by virtue of being born. Instead he has certain criteria to establish who is a subject-of-it’s-own life (*The Case for Animal Rights*). While Kant saw only beings capable of rational agency as having any sort of inherent value, Regan sees this value in a larger variety of life. The CI tells us that no being in possession of reason should be treated as a means to an end by any other agent, that all such beings are ends in themselves. Regan attempts to broaden the deontological scope in this area by saying that reason should not be the determining factor in whether an animal has inherent value. Certain animals qualify as a subjects-of-its-own-life, and therefore have inherent value and a right to be treated as an end in itself. (*The Case for Animal Rights*)

Despite the gains made for animal ethics in Regan's theory, it still falls into the problem of being-human centered, as well as the very qualities at the heart of it being somewhat arbitrary and very hard to pin down. When defining a subject-of-life Regan cites qualities such as "beliefs, desires, perceptions, and memory..." (*The Case 22*) The things listed are very easy to conceptualize as being something a human has, or can easily do. We can see examples of belief when we have conversations with other humans, but how would one apply the idea of beliefs to a dog's experience? This is a case of the criteria already being something humans can recognize based upon our own direct experience, so we are more likely to wind up already in the circle of moral care. The deeper problem that we have already seen in previous theories, and one Regan does not evade, is that when the qualities used to decide moral standing are human-centered, we do not have an inclusionary theory, and therefore some forms of life that may be essential to the overall system will be inevitably left out. This would include infants of any species, as well as possibly those with mental disorders. More importantly it allows for beings to be discounted just because we do not see evidence of these traits either by personal observation, or through scientific ones.

Perceptions are another tricky phenomenon that demonstrate an ambiguity, as well as arbitrariness to his theory. This is something that varies from human to human, not to mention from animal to animal, in such a way that makes it hard to tell exactly what is going on with any species. When can we determine that perception is really occurring? Persons in persistent comas illustrate this problem. The medical community has never come to a consensus as to whether the body and eye movements that happen with such persons are really a result of a type of perception, or merely involuntary

reaction. I am not arguing that it is always impossible to decide when beliefs and perception is present, only that it is often difficult to know whether and what beliefs and perceptions are present. As a result, Regan's way of marking off the moral community, in terms of the notion of 'subject of a life', though more inclusive, is problematically vague.

While Tom Regan's theory of animal rights made headway on deontological grounds, it still starts at an exclusionary human-based center, and uses vague and possibly arbitrary qualities to define the moral community.

The last animal ethics theory that will be under discussion is that of Peter Singer who has arguably been the most outspoken animal welfare philosopher of the twentieth century and one of the leading activists on behalf of the ethical consideration and treatment of animals. He comes from the utilitarian camp of philosophers and has intentionally moved away from centering the discussion on "rights talk".

The shift in focus and base here is that it seems silly to say an animal has a right. As Singer notes, the idea of giving an animal the right to vote, or to own property is illogical. (*Animal Liberation*) What non-human animals do have though, and what all sentient beings have, is an interest in not suffering. When considering who is included in the moral consideration group the initial answer is much simpler than any that have come before. Those that get consideration only need to be able to suffer. Jeremy Bentham brought this question up a century before so Singer was not the first utilitarian to consider it.

Singer has also defined who suffers and it is also more of a common sense answer than we have seen before. Who suffers is not a big mystery that must be worked out through complicated metaphysical or ethical theories. It is actually something that is

quite easy to see and has been right in front of us all along. Singer asks us to go very contrary to Descartes and simply look at what animals seem to be saying in their non-verbal communications. We suffer as humans; we feel both physical and mental pain. Singer argues that when we see what looks like pain or fear in the actions, reactions and attitudes of other beings, we should take them for exactly what they look like. If I see another human grab their leg and scream right after something hits them on the knee I am not going to ask them "Excuse me, but are you yelling because that was pleasurable?" I in fact, would not. What most people would assume is that the sound the person made was an expression of pain. Singer believes we are also safe in assuming this about animals.

Singer has come the closest to a theory that respects all life involved in the many complex systems that keep our own existence as a species moving forward, and he has attempted to eliminate the human centered starting point that has underlined most other theories. However, he still fails to give all life and inclusionary starting point, which is essential in the big picture for all species on the planet. In Singer's view if a being lacks the ability to suffer we need not consider it. This leaves out things that we do not see suffering in. Singer himself goes back and forth when it comes mollusks.

In the first edition of *Animal Liberation* he cites that he does occasionally eat certain kinds of mollusk because it seems unlikely they suffer since we have not found a nervous system in them. In later editions he amends this to say he believes the soundest course may be to avoid these things because we cannot be sure, but he himself is not positive where he stands on the issue. (*Animal Liberation*) This means Singer also has a bit of vagueness in his theory that opens the door to arbitrariness. So mollusks do not

have a firm seat at the table of ethical consideration. They do or do not have a status, depending on which side of preference utilitarianism you are looking at. There is a kind of arbitrariness based on how much the creature in question shares some characteristic we see in ourselves.

This is problematic in both Singer's scheme, and as far as the idea of inclusion goes. He has not proven that they are not suffering, so in following Singer's advice we could accidentally be endorsing animal cruelty by way of ignorance. An inclusive theory would ask for some sort of argument or proof that there is nothing worthy of consideration going on, and it would be based in what is good for all life, not just the noticeably suffering kind.

Now that the history of animal ethics has been examined, and we have seen how far it has come, alongside how much farther it needs to go, it is time to turn directly to how existentialism can offer a possible solution for all animals, both human and non-human.

### **III. THE CASE FOR AND AGAINST AN EXISTENTIAL ETHIC**

Existentialism is sometimes seen as incompatible with both animals as well as with ethics. Usually animals are ruled out of any ontological and ethical consideration because they are seen as not experiencing the same problems of existence we humans do. It is generally assumed that because they cannot see the absurdity or the ambiguity inherent in existence, and they cannot exercise radical freedom, they are not part of the overall questions of existence. Existentialism is also argued as unable to generate an ethic because of the subjective nature of existence. I will argue that to take any of these stances would be to demonstrate a short-sighted view of the ability of existentialism to take on the entire scope of the questions of existence that are at the heart of it.

To many, any attempt to fit an animal theory into an existential framework might seem impossible. The view is that animals are not on the same ontological level as humans, so they are not going to be part of the questions being asked. This ignores the actual empirical evidence that not only are animals a participating part of our existence, but they are embodied beings with lives of their own. As such, they also encounter some of the same problems that arise from being as we do. They need to eat to stay alive. Animals must struggle against their environment to stay alive. It would seem logical that a study of existence and of the questions and problems that arise as a result of that condition would address all beings in that condition.

In addition to the issue of who is involved in basic existential dilemmas there is the question raised by participation. If a being participates in the problems and questions asked, whether from the point of human awareness or not, shouldn't they, the beings, be automatically brought to the table when answers are being considered? What has instead happened with most existential thinkers is a narrowing of the scope of beings and issues that are considered relevant. Animals are automatically skipped over because of a vast array of suppositions that are just accepted and not questioned. When looked at closely all of this seems to go very much against what the world as it is given shows us. This is important to note because most existential theorists are very much in favor of taking the world as it given and not looking for hidden meanings or machinations. The mystery is in personal meaning, not in the observable world.

There are two specific areas in which animals are either already doing existential work on their own or are interacting with and contributing to our world and our existence, as we go through the experience of following the questions existentialism asks. Both of these things can be understood through an analysis of the work of Jean Paul Sartre. The ideas that will be put under the microscope are the claim that "existence precedes essence" and idea of the "Other". It is presumed that animals do not engage in anything that could be described as building an essence. Upon closer inspection of the basic foundation of this concept we will see that this is not as different when you move from humans to animals as it would seem. The second topic on the table will be the Other. When we remove the supposition that animals cannot be participating members in existential situations and look at what actually is already happening between humans and animals, we can see that animals have and are already playing this role.

In understanding the overall work of Sartre there must be an understanding of what he means by facticity, inauthenticity, and projects. One is frozen in facticity when one fails to recognize that one is a being who can both choose things and change one's mind about those choices. If I take myself as a given in the same way I take certain concrete aspects of the world, then I am denying my ability to change myself beyond the level of unconscious object. Being in facticity means accepting what the world tells you about yourself as being the sum total of the truth. You simply do not see your own obligation and ability to choose for yourself as you move forward in life. When one is in this state it is said one is living inauthentically. Our existential project is staying out of facticity and moving towards freedom by building our essence. This brings us to the idea of existence precedes essence.

A simple way to put the idea of existence precedes essence would be to say we are born, and then at a certain age we begin to make choices that create us. No person has an innate nature that will guide her to what she is supposed to be or do. No essence is there waiting to be uncovered. If there is no innate nature, then the idea of there being a state that we destined to work for and achieve falls apart as well. We also lose other things in the Sartrean model of the person that work in favor of more inclusive theories. The idea of *a priori* knowledge, or a soul, for that matter is lost. Sartre puts it in its most basic form when he says "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself."

(*Existentialism* 15) All beings start in a state of nothingness outside of the physical self and then proceed from there. Now that we know what we are not, or in a sense, don't have, what does Sartre mean when he declares we must create ourselves?



Each person has to craft his or her own essence, and no particular individual's choices in doing so are any better than another's. The ways in which we do this making of ourselves varies from being to being. Since we are a physical form that is a kind of metaphysical and ethical blank slate the range of choices open to any human can seem endless. One person may choose to go to college and become a doctor; while another decides what he wants to be is a soldier. One path is as good as the other as long as it is the product of a conscious and active choice. In this way, we are no particular someone, there is no essence we are, independent of the activities we undertake, the experiences we undergo, and the choices we make. We see now that humans must make themselves. But what of animals? Can they even engage in this type of thing?

In the case of animals it is clear that they cannot build the essence of a Doctor, or a soldier, but is there really such a large space in between my initial existence and theirs? Is there also no sense in which they make themselves? To address both these questions we should start with instinct as a basic common bond that creates existential dilemmas.

The first order of all animals is seek to satisfy those things in our biology that must be appeased for us to continue. All beings seek food and some type of shelter at times. These are cases of instinct to be sure, but they give rise to many of the questions and problems that are considered existential in nature. For instance, it can be argued that the most basic reason we get jobs is to keep a roof over our heads and to feed ourselves. All sorts of crisis of meaning, action, and direction come from what type of job or career we choose. We as humans can add these problems on top of the initial one. Nonetheless, while animals can't do that type of addition, the initial problem of food and shelter is still there for most of them. Typically humans have glanced right over this piece of

information because the way an animal addresses this problem seems very different from the way people do.

It is puzzling then that when existentialism turns to animals it does not recognize that non-human animals are indeed already doing some of these same things in the pursuit making themselves. When analyzing the questions of existence and the relationships that happen within the framework of existence we have typically given humans instant inclusion because we recognize through similar experiences, and also through our interactions with them, that we are all in the same boat. We all start having no essence and then we build from the ground up. Although this is not evident all the time because that pursuit is as varied for animals as it is humans, it is nonetheless there. An example of this can be found in something as simple as the need to eat.

When you strip it down and look at the why of it, and not just the how, is going to the grocery store to buy dinner really that different from a cow looking for green grass, or a lion chasing down its prey? All beings have to find nourishment if they want to live. Even a slug will crawl blindly forward in an effort to find sustenance. All things are involved in the existential problem of survival. If anyone doubts that this is an issue within existentialism all that needs to be done is to look at the problem of death and how much weight in existential writings this has been given.

One of the common threads in this argument is absurdity in the fact that we don't want to die, yet we do, and all we have done becomes meaningless. There are others who have argued that it takes the awareness of the loss of possibilities for death to be a problem, and animals don't have that. Is losing all we have done, or could do, really the problematic part of death? Perhaps it is actually the constant struggle we all face to stay

alive that is more pressing as an existential dilemma. We have no idea what happens after death. All of that still sits in the land of theory. What we do know is that at a very basic level everything seeks to continue its self and avoid death.

Someone might want to argue at this point that humans in this pursuit have choices to make. That is the difference between human and non-human animals. Don't animals also have to make choices at times? They are presented with problems as well, and the universe is as deaf to them as it is to us. Whether or not that deafness is noted, the problem and the choices it generates are still there. As mentioned above, cows look for greener grass. They will pass up dead patches for green ones. They will also eat the dead stuff if the green grass is gone. They are making basic choices of preference.

On a more recognizable level, how many of us have had a pet that would only eat one particular type of food? The pet can tell the difference, and will not eat anything else. It seems that while it is certainly true that we cannot say an animal has the weight of choice and radical freedom discussed by many philosophers, to say animals have no pursuit of existence or choices and preferences in said pursuit is a bold and incorrect overstatement. More to the point, why is radical freedom the basis for who gets to be in the existential community when it is a characteristic all existent beings do not share? Choice and making is something almost all living things share. Animals are in that group. They do in fact make themselves after they show up on the scene. If making consists of choices and actions how can we possibly say this is never something animals do? Humans just fail to give them credit in this area because it is not the same type of making we can engage in.

Another area in which human animals fail to see what is really going on as far as non-human animal's falls within our own interactions with them. The tendency to ignore the actual relationships and the interactions that are already there between humans and animals is even more confusing than the failure to recognize that animals too confront existential challenges. An existentialist never denies that her interplay with others of the human form happens and that such interactions are likely to have a profound effect on her, so why exclude interactions with non-humans? All through existential history we have seen humans labeled and put into different categories based solely on how they interact with us and each other, as well as by their places within those interactions. Hegel and Nietzsche both theorized about the master/slave relationship. (*Phenomenology of Spirit* and *The Gay Science*) Heidegger argued that the "They" has a profound effect on how we face our deaths, and as a result, our lives. (*Being and Time*). Jean Paul Sartre in particular put a heavy emphasis on the Other and how our interactions with them can have a profound effect on how we see ourselves, as well as how we act. (*Being and Nothingness*)

Sartre describes the Other as "...an indispensable mediator between myself and me." (Being 302) The Other is that being that shows up in that space between who we think we are and who we really are. One would probably think the Other actually reflects who we are, but that may not always be so. The real problem lies in the risk we run of becoming an object to ourselves as a result of the Other's look. In that reflection we are no longer a subjective being, we are the object of someone else's gaze much in the same way a table is. In *Being and Nothingness* he uses the concept of shame to illustrate this (301-302). If we are alone and we do something tacky or weird we usually don't analyze

it; it simply happened. As soon as we either think about someone having seen us, or if someone actually did see us, we feel embarrassed or ashamed.

The imagined or actual viewing of our act brings a sense of embarrassment that was not there before. We go from the being having a subjective experience to the object that was doing something it shouldn't. If we live what the Other projects to us about ourselves without consciously thinking about it we run the risk of getting trapped in an inauthentic version of ourselves. The Other sees us, and we may believe they reflect us; in fact, we likely do believe they are reflecting us. It is important to note that the Other does not even need to actually be consciously thinking what we fear, or even thinking of us at all, only that we in some sense we fear the Other has seen us and have correctly assessed us. From that point the problem becomes whether or not we see ourselves as the object the Other does, complete with the lack of freedom to build ourselves that comes along with that.

Can we also say that in the look animals can have the same effect on us that humans have? The look is about being removed from our subjective experiences and actions based on what we think another being has seen in us. Part of it is also the choice we have to either embrace or deny what we are shown. Those of us who have house pets probably live this interaction daily. When a person comes home at the end of a stressful day in which irritation and anger have taken hold, he may be prone to be louder and more aggressive without conscious thought. Doors may get slammed or pets may be yelled at. Now imagine you are that person and your dog has just watched all of this and been the pet yelled at. How will the animal react?

The tendency of a house pet in that situation is to look at you in fear. If we see this, and forget that the dog is only giving us a momentary external snapshot of ourselves, and not an accurate overall picture, we could unthinkingly give up our freedom to choose who we become in the next moment. We will think of ourselves as the angry person who kicks things and yells at animals. We forget we are actually the person who had a bad day, but always has the freedom to decide the angry person is not who we are, or want to be. Now figure in the frequency of these interactions for most people.

Pet owners alone experience it many times a day as they go through the normal course of living their lives. When we come home from work and our dog is thrilled to see us we feel like a being of value. A dog who is trained can actually feel at times as though she is participating in a conversation with us. Imagine the dog that goes to the back door and scratches to get out. That animal is making a moral demand on us through a recognizable signal that we taught him. What I mean by a moral request is that to ignore a dog that has to go to the bathroom is a cruel thing. Given all of this it seems downright mistaken to discount interaction of this type and with this level of frequency as being unimportant in the scheme of what the Other is. It also negates its role and its importance in our overall ontological development. To do so ignores the reality we live with.

This is not only a fact of existence for a pet owner. Think of the wide range of animals that can look at us that we encounter daily. The potential is there for them to reflect us at any given time. But can we exclude beings that cannot look us in the face? There is evidence in even the behavior of insects that can create the same feelings and thoughts in us as the look does. Even roaches run away when you start smacking the ground next to them. They appear to be reacting in fear, and the person pounding the

ground is the thing to be afraid of. It is the same as a dog running in fear after it has been hit. We are pulled out of our subjective experience as the person who hates roaches and into the objective role of a being that terrorizes roaches.

If we accept that view of ourselves, then we may unthinkingly terrorize roaches because we believe we are the person who does that type of thing. Keep in mind it is not the terrorizing that is actually the important part, rather it is being perceived in that way could make us think that is an unchangeable part of our selves. Our essence becomes fixed in a way, and we have lost part of our ability to move towards freedom. In this way animals already play a role in our moral lives, and so they are already members of a moral community. Now that we understand the existential idea of existence precedes essence and the Other we can discuss the seeming inability to fit ethics into an existential philosophy.

So exactly why are existentialism and ethics viewed as two things that just simply cannot be married? Ethics is usually seen as looking at what it means to be good, or in general, what the Good is. The pursuit has typically been of a standard that can be adopted to fit various ethical dilemmas. Most humans have had questions about what the appropriate action in a certain situation would be. Ethical systems attempt to provide answers. We can take the Kantian Categorical Imperative discussed earlier in this work. Kant actually had five formulations in order to try to provide as many possibilities for answers as he could. (*Metaphysics of Morals*) At the same time they all involved finding a maxim or standard that all beings should follow. An example would be lying. If a person is contemplating lying about something he or she could put into the CI and test it as a potential maxim in the form of “All people in my circumstances should be able to

lie.” The problem that needs to be explored centers around existentialism’s embracing of the subjectivity of experience. Because of this embracing we are never truly in the same circumstances as any other person. So, the universal rule gives us no practical guidance.

As ethics is typically conceived, an existentialist might argue that there is an incompatibility between ethics and existentialism because of the existential idea that subjective experience is primary. It is simply not possible to derive a standard for all beings to live by. Each person decides what the Good is for himself or herself. This derives directly from the idea that existence precedes essence. We know that we all have the same responsibility to create ourselves. On the of road self-creation perhaps we will each encounter different questions and problems. Determining the right thing is as individual as the questions and depends on what that individual wants and believes to be good based on his projects and life experiences. The existential problems and responsibilities of a sixteen-year old single mom are vastly different than those of a fifty-year old married business owner. How could there be an external ethical standard that could answer their concerns effectively?

The answer can be found by changing the conception of ethics somewhat, and in once again looking at the truth of human experience, not just theories of it. Ethics to this point tended to be about codes and abstractions. This is particularly true of deontological and utilitarian arguments. The existential point of view is that such external standards can never reflect or aid in the internal subjective experience. To follow such a standard would be to embrace the object that is external to you, and, in a way, to accept your facticity. This means that once again one loses the freedom to choose.



Perhaps an ethic that held at its heart the support of the individual and its subjective choice would work. While the idea of what is right and wrong is something that can change from person to person, the fact that we are all beings who exist and are trying to build ourselves is something that cannot be denied. This simple paring down of ethics to supporting each other as we make what Sartre called our "...thrust towards existence..." (*Existentialism* 15) would involve the retaining of the subjective experience because that is the very thing that generates it. If we look closely at the work of Sartre we can see that even he recognized a value and a type of ethical relationship.

One of the most often quoted lines from Sartre is "In choosing myself, I chose Man." (*Existentialism* 18). What he means by this is that when he makes a choice he is saying the thing being chosen is a Good. The thing preferred is part of what he believes a good human to be. In doing this he is also saying this thing is of value. This is a roundabout endorsement of something external, of a value of a sort. What is of value is that which is judged to be something that contributes to the idea of a good person. This creates room in existentialism to embrace external things, as long as you do so from a wholly subjective perspective. Know the thing you choose, and choose it freely, always being aware you can change your mind, and always with the knowledge that you have endorsed something as being part of what goes into being a good person. He further argued that when we endorse something as good, we do so for the ideal person. Understood this way we have a heavier burden in choosing than we previously recognized. What we choose can have an effect on our fellow human just by virtue of the fact we chose it, so we should pick carefully. Responsibility – one aspect of authenticity,

of choosing with eyes open-- is that one accepts responsibility for what follows from the choice

I have argued that existentialism should include all players in existential questions. I have also argued that animals are indeed within that group by virtue of building themselves because they seek to continue their existence as humans do and because they have already been participating in relationships that fit within the concepts of the Other. We can also see that there is a basis for a general ethic that would support each other's pursuits as we attempt to create our essences. If we grant these suppositions to be true, then what needs to come next? The next step would be to understand the foundation from which inclusion and support of all projects flows. For this it is time to turn to the work of Simone de Beauvoir and the idea of intersubjectivity.

#### IV. INTERSUBJECTIVITY

The idea of intersubjectivity is not new to philosophy or to existentialism. Simone de Beauvoir explored it extensively in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, as well as in a number of other works. She was also the first existentialist to openly argue for an ethic. It is said that her work in this area all started on a dare from Albert Camus to develop an existentialism of action. While Beauvoir's work gives humans a path as far as how we act towards each other, it did not look at the implications of itself beyond the human realm. To best understand how this could have been done I will first unpack Beauvoir's case for an ethic. Key to understanding her idea for an ethic is to be aware of her conception of the subject, as well as how her idea of an existential project differs from Sartre's. She also sees the initial attitude we take in those projects in a somewhat different way from most other existentialists.

The term subject has a long history in philosophy and many definitions. For example, to Kant the subject was the morally responsible agent who bore certain rights. (*Metaphysics of Morals*) Kant's definition has influenced ethical theory for many centuries. De Beauvoir steps away from assigning a subject any qualities are linked to duties, rules, or roles. Her explanation of a subject involves only two facts: that of embodiment and that of situated-ness. (*Ethics of Ambiguity*) All subjects share these two qualities. By definition we are beings who are in physical form or we would not be anything at all according to existentialism. It is also evident from the get go that we are

one of many embodied beings that are set amongst a backdrop of all other beings in the same situation. We are here, on the scene of existence and there are many of us in the same state.

Sartre saw our own making as our primary project, and Beauvoir does not disagree with him on this basic point. Her difference is more within the attitude we use in approaching our project of ourselves, and how that relates to making. She sees this as a task that is difficult, true, but she believes that we can take on this task without seeing it from a point of view of primarily anxiety or anger because we have been given this difficult burden. We can decide to own our projects, to look at them in a positive light as being what we want to do, not something we have to do. After all, these projects are the way we create ourselves, and this does not seem to be a thing only of despair. We can choose to positively affirm them as expressions of our will. They should be seen as assets, not limitations. Later there will be a discussion as to how this can also somewhat change our perception of the Other. For now we will turn to that initially different grounding point of experience.

Beauvoir based her theories in ambiguity, not in a kind of absurdity. Absurdity tells us that as we alone are in charge of making ourselves, and that any type of objective meaning is impossible. There are a variety of reasons why this is argued but they all boil down to the idea that we want something from the Universe or God that will give us a sign pointing toward an objective standard we need to adopt. Human nature is to want the pressure of making ourselves to be reduced somewhat through something being given to us as already worthy of adopting. This relief never comes because we are never shown anything. Either there is nothing there to hear our pleas, or whatever is there does not

care. Either way we are left in the absurd condition of always desiring something we will not get.

Ambiguity is somewhat different and frames our experience as fundamentally unlike that of an absurd one. The general conception of ambiguity is of a state that does not give you any easy way to see answers, but also does not preclude knowing something. It does not totally deny the existence of any answer, only that it needs to be won in a way. Where absurdity would seem to be saying give up, ambiguity forces us to just work harder. Beauvoir does not deny the existence of absurdity. She does not reject that we are prone to try to find that external answer to make life easier, nor does she try to assert that there is a universe that hears us and responds. She instead argues that absurdity is not what is at the heart of human existence, only that it is a facet of it. What does instead lie at the center or base of humankind's experience is ambiguity. There are two aspects to this ambiguity that need to be understood. The first we have already discussed in that it frames what we can know differently. It gives us the possibility of finding an external meaning. If life is ambiguous and not absurd, our initial attitude towards it can also change. In labeling ambiguity as the basic component of existence we have the possibility of an ethic. The second aspect of ambiguity that needs to be understood is in how it changes the way in which we can see the Other.

The second important aspect of ambiguity lies in relation to how the Other makes us an object, yet we are dependent on the group of others to live. She does not want us to focus on how problematic this relationship is, as Sartre does, nor does she deny that it can be problematic. Initially she is more concerned with communicating the truth of the idea. "The privilege, which he alone, possesses, of being a sovereign and unique subject amidst

a universe of objects, is what he shares with all his fellow-men". (Beauvoir 7) Each of us is at once the subject and the object. We exist in a singular state, but among other beings in that same state.

Now that a relatively clear understanding of projects and ambiguity has been established let us move on to the relationship between ethics and ambiguity. Up until the work of de Beauvoir it had been argued and assumed that existentialism could have no ethic because of the nature of subjectivity and personal responsibility, but Beauvoir grasped something around her that no one else had noted, what she saw as an undeniable logical truth. While subjectivity is the correct starting point, we are a collective of subjective experiences all trying to do the same thing: make ourselves through our projects. Further, as subjects, while we are in some sense alone and isolated, as Sartre claimed, we are always already intertwined. Our subjective experiences are linked by this common fact. This linking is the definition of intersubjectivity. From her viewpoint existentialism had long denied any sort of thing that is true for all, when there was indeed a very simple truth right in front of it, that of intersubjectivity. Now let us turn to the way in which intersubjectivity generates an ethic.

As discussed before, existentialism also sees no possibility of an ethic; it argues there is no chance for external meaning because of the subjective nature of making and absurdity. In short, there is no value in which to base a meaning that proves useful to us all. If we consider what Beauvoir has put forth so far concerning ambiguity, we can see that the initial supposition that the type of external value needed for an objective cause or meaning is impossible to find is incorrect. Ambiguity by definition works to directly change that initial premise. If we then consider what she argues for with the idea of

intersubjectivity, we can start to see where she was going as far as an ethical existentialism.

Ambiguity gives life to us as a clouded, uncertain thing, but not a situation in which nothing can be done or known. Meaning for the individual can be found. While it is true that it is something that is fought for, it is nonetheless there to be disclosed. As stated previously, she does not abandon absurdity entirely. She accepts that we may cry out for understanding and solace from the universe and never get it, but this does not leave life devoid of potential meaning. Beauvoir allows for the door to be open to the idea that there might be a value or standard that it would make sense for everyone to agree with. In using the term “ambiguity” she is telling us that our search for external meaning is worth it because there is a potential to get an answer. The real question then becomes what could that answer possibly be?

When happens when we put together the two ideas underpinning her theory of ambiguity, that of ambiguity not as a meaningless state and the re-framing of the Other? We find ourselves in a setting in which as embodied situated beings we can find a meaning, as well as a way to look at the Other in a more positive light. We see that we are always the Other as well as the subject and we find common ground with our fellow humans by way of shared situation. The ability to see the Other more positively is actually our biggest clue as to what ambiguity is hiding. Perhaps that meaning making that occurs can be about each other? But how can we possibly do this if the Other is as much a problem as Sartre argues?

Sartrean ontology sees those external to us as a huge problem. The Other can always rob us of our freedom and lock us into our facticity if we let it. Beauvoir does not

deny that the tendency of the other is to objectify us and that embracing facticity can be the unfortunate result. She does not see this situation as a given though.

We all have limitations we can't get past, such as I, a woman who stands at five foot nine inches can never be a man of six feet. If we put these natural constraints to freedom aside we are still left with the choice, instead of viewing the Other as an obstacle, to focus on our shared goal of freedom and making ourselves, and look at each other as assets we have in getting there. We must go out of our way to struggle not only for ourselves, but for each other.

Beauvoir is recognizing the dependency of systems and people on each other. Each subject jointly supporting the freedom of others creates the framework we need to obtain freedom. We can look at the Other as part of our project. From de Beauvoir's perspective this means our interactions with the Other become something else we can positively assume as part of our overall goal. Intersubjectivity does not stop at encouraging us to aid others in order to help ourselves. It also requires that we not do some things we may have already been doing.

Not only is it important to enhance another's flight towards making, we also cannot stand in the way of that making. We have a responsibility to refrain from doing things that involve us knowingly inhibiting or hurting others. When we pick our projects, we must pick things that do not undermine or compromise the ability of others to seek their freedom. We are dependent on others for the network in which our freedom develops in that we each are only one person. An individual cannot create the whole world. Still, the individual should use his or her freedom responsibly and work to create a



world in which everyone is free, and in turn, trust that every other individual is doing the same.

An example of how the lack of support or intentional oppression can limit freedom is found in a victim of physical abuse. This person would most likely tend to view himself as exactly that, a victim. When this happens the range of possibilities for making has just been severely limited – both because of the nature of the type of definition, for victims are often not agents, and because of the fact of definition. This person might tend to play that part as he engages in other relationships. If he has children his own inability to see his freedom and move towards it would mean that he was unable to do the same for his children. How can you teach what you do not know? There is no reason to believe it would not be the same in his close relationships with adults.

On the other hand, it stands to reason that if I responsibly give myself a full range of possibilities, I can help widen the possibilities for others, as they can in turn do for others in their lives. In *Ethics of Ambiguity* Beauvoir gives us many cautionary tales of how responsible making can go awry in the stories of those who do not recognize or in fact deny their freedom with examples such as *The Passionate Man* and *The Nihilist*. She also gives us stories of correct making and embracing your freedom while promoting the freedom of others. *The Artist* is a good example of this situation. By willingly creating and then giving his project to the Other, which frees him to start another, he thrust himself towards freedom, as well as gives something of meaning to another. When we end oppression for one person we give them something of meaning as well.

They can also show other oppressed beings possibilities to be free. Our own subjective freedom can be enhanced in that now the newly liberated person can create

inroads of freedom for others, and we are always one of the Others in addition to being a subject. The person's new grasp of freedom affects me. If I exist in a world in which all beings are enhancing each other's thrust towards freedom and out of facticity, I already have more options in my pursuit of making than if I constantly had to battle the Other to stay authentic.

So in the end we should work and will others to be as free as we are because it helps to ensure our continued freedom. To protect our subjectivity we need to recognize the reality of intersubjectivity, the shared fact of radical freedom, and admit to the idea of an ethic that can enhance that. We have already discussed that ethics is about relationships. Given this it seems to will someone else to be responsibly free and to help that person achieve that is in fact to be moral. The ethic is already inherent in the action. With this movement the Other becomes inextricably linked to our projects, and us to theirs. It is this dependency on the Other that Beauvoir is trying to get us to accept with both its pitfalls and its amazing power to free us. In short "An ethics of Ambiguity will be one which will refuse to deny *a priori* that separate existents can, at the same time, be bound to each other, that their individual freedoms can forge laws valid for all." (Beauvoir 18)

Beauvoir also takes what could be seen as a Kantian turn when she maintains that how we treat others is reflective of what we are making ourselves into. We must always remember that, first and foremost, our thrusting towards making is for our own individual freedom. That personal freedom has many components. We have already established that even though there is no truly objective overall moral standard in the world, we are not excused from trying to do what is right for others, and most importantly, for ourselves.

Our character development is an issue because it is part of becoming. Beauvoir is saying two things: that helping others to achieve their freedom opens up more possibilities for me to exercise my own freedom, and that as I create what Sartre would call my essence, I am ensuring that I am becoming the best person I can be by ensuring maximum potential freedom for all.

At this point we should be firmly aware that intersubjectivity is an ethical standard that considers the projects and needs of all subjects in the collective. I have also argued via Sartre's conceptions of the Other and existence preceding essence that animals are indeed part of the collective. They participate with humans in ethical relationships, and they have made their continued existence their own personal project, as humans have done as well. In short, I have argued that existentialism generates an ethic that animals are already a part of, whether humans have acknowledged it or not. Intersubjectivity describes the nature of that already present ethical relationship between existents--both human and non-human. With this background in place it is now possible to understand why inclusion is the ideal starting place and what the ramifications are for the overall situations of animals.

## V. INCLUSION

Now it has been argued that the majority of work in animal ethics has moved towards exclusion without much of a sound basis and that an existentially inclusive perspective can change this, the discussion can take a more comprehensive look at what this would mean.

An inclusive theory is one that does not forbid the use of animals for food, among other things; it does not require that we make no moral distinctions between humans and animals. It does mean that if the existential projects of a human and an animal clash, the human must prove that there is a good reason for him or her to be favored. What is meant by that is that if a member of the moral community is to have its standing violated or discounted in some way an argument that is not centered solely on human characteristics or wants needs to be produced. For instance, there will be a discussion later that centers around meat eating. It is not the intention of this piece to condemn meat eating entirely, but to make the case that there needs to be ethical consideration in the form of arguments behind it. I will return to this later in the thesis when I explore the ethical considerations surrounding the consumption of meat, but for now I will turn to a deeper definition of who is included.

Inclusion means every being has an initial status as being inside the moral family. This gets the being standing in any moral question or dilemma. It is never assumed that the being can just be dispensed with or ignored. On a larger scale this, it seems, could

reflect on all life, including plants. Both *Flora* and *Fauna* are part of the systems that make up our planet. For now we will set aside the question of whether plants are part of the moral community and examine the implications of the arguments created here as far as animals and insects.

Recall the idea that existence precedes essence. Any being that works in any way to continue its existence would fall in this category in that it is born and then makes an essence by way of the existential drive for life. All life does this, so all life gets consideration in the equation. Granted a snail's pursuit of its existence looks vastly different than that of a human, but that snail will seek to eat, just the way a human does. It will also die without nourishment. Given this, it seems as though both animals and insects are a basic part of the moral community and thus would have to be argued out of the circle of intersubjectivity.

If we go back to Sartre's conception of the Other, we find a something that could be problematic to an inclusive theory. If a being cannot reflect then it could be argued that it is not engaging in a moral relationship with humans. The effect the being can have on our project seems minimal. Even if we grant that a being can't reflect, all that an opponent to our position would have is a beginning argument to move to exclude the being. Remember we have already started at inclusion for any being having a biological drive to continue itself. Granted it will be harder to keep a being in the moral circle without the Look, but it is still not a given that the being will get no consideration. Intersubjectivity also encourages us to also take a look at the level of freedom for the whole collective of subjects, which can sometimes be influenced by groups of individual species. So how an individual treats a particular being may be determined by what is best

for both of the larger groups they belong to. A spider is an excellent example of something that cannot reflect, yet holds somewhat of a value for humans, both as an individual and set of individuals.

A spider cannot look us in the face and reflect us in such a way that could trap us in our facticity. This does not mean that the spider does not have a place in the overall system and that they are not part of intersubjectivity. A spider eats many times their weight in bugs a day depending on what variety we are speaking of. One of the most helpful bugs they eat as far as humans are concerned is mosquitoes. In particular the Banana Spider is known for this very thing. (Hawkinson)

If a person wanted to kill a Banana Spider we could argue that there was no point in it, being that the spider poses no danger to humans, but we would not have much of a leg to stand on as far as intersubjectivity and our projects with the death of one spider. But suppose that same person wanted to introduce a toxin in the environment to kill all Banana Spiders. The person's fear of them was just too overwhelming and the person just wanted to eradicate the species. At that point we can cite intersubjectivity as needing to take precedence over the fear of the individual. While it is true that a spider cannot engage in the look, it can be argued that it nonetheless participates in my project by way of killing insects that carry diseases that are deadly to humans. Intersubjectivity demands that I support its project in order that it may continue to help me in mine.

Intersubjectivity represents a certain type of dependency. The Other in whatever forms they may take, are always there, always a part of our projects. All things we do occur in the presence of the Other. They are inextricably linked to us whether we want them to be part of our project or not. A banana spider that lives in my backyard and I are

engaged in a somewhat interdependent relationship based on the idea of intersubjectivity. We both exist, and we both happen to live at my house. I may not like the spider, but there it is, and what is more, it helps me unintentionally. To continue its project of living it needs mosquitoes and other insects. To continue my project of living I need to be as disease free as possible. The banana spider will unintentionally aid me in that pursuit to a degree, as long as I let it continue to do what it needs to do; which is to eat mosquitoes. That particular spider is dependent on me not to kill it, and I can depend on it to eat some of the mosquitoes in my backyard.

Furthermore, we can cite the building of a web as pretty strong evidence that the spider is attempting to survive, thus giving it weight in the overall argument as a being who has that instinctive need to continue. The spider example also illustrates how an inclusive theory would work. The individuals, and in some situations the group making the decision on behalf of another individual or group who cannot participate, must have reasons to negate the standing of those without a voice. This calls to mind the idea of moral agents and moral patients. (*The Case For Animal Rights*)

Moral agents are those individuals that have full standing in any situation and are the decision makers and can be held morally responsible. Moral patients are those individuals that for one reason or the other cannot weigh in. Beings in this category could include small children, those with serious psychiatric disturbances, persons in a vegetative state or in comas, or the elderly with dementia, among others. Although the reasons each person cannot participate fully are vast, all of the reasons are about an inability to be part of the dialogue.

It can also be argued that non-human animals and insects are in this category because they cannot communicate their will to us. It is generally assumed that those who can participate have a high level of responsibility to consider the needs of those members of the moral community who cannot--the moral patients. We as moral agents should be considering the ethical implications of our actions as far as how they impact not only ourselves and other moral agents, but in particular the ramifications for moral patients. Starting from inclusion and having to argue for it if you want those spiders eliminated from the circle is a good way to respect intersubjectivity and the status of those who could be placed in the category of moral patient.

With a clearer understanding of who is included in ethical consideration it should be easier to see how an existential animal ethic would work. What can a member expect as a given as far as its needs and its place in ethical dilemmas? The modern issue of urban sprawl illustrates this. Let us imagine that there is currently a housing subdivision being planned on the outskirts of a city. As things stand now the animals occupying that area would be of little initial concern. Typically we would just bulldoze and build, expecting animals to just get out of our way. This would not be the case with inclusion as the rule. In an inclusionary theory there would have to be a really good reason to even start discussion to displace the animals and that reason could not be based solely on humans wanting to develop the area. Humans would need to move towards arguing that subdivision needs to be built, and that no other location could be utilized. After all, the individual status of each member of the group stands at an even level initially. It is within the needs of the members that we will find where one group may need to be given a higher level of consideration than another. The overall point however, is to ensure a



process of dialogue that considers the non-human animals already at the location, as well as the people who want to live there.

Inclusion would also demand fair continuing treatment of non-human life, even if it is successfully argued that their needs are going to come second to humans. The example of the subdivision being built can further illustrate this. Let's pretend for a moment that both the needs of human and animal were weighed and animals came out on the losing end. An inclusive theory would argue that just expecting them to move would not be enough moral consideration. To minimize suffering and to respect their existential project we must perhaps help them move. All sorts of questions would come into play. Where do we take them? Would doing so be safe in terms of them being able to adapt? How would we get them there? How much of the population can we actually do this with? As individuals situated in a collective we each have a duty to each member of the community to explore as many avenues as present themselves.

If in the process of addressing these questions we cannot find answers inclusion would indicate we should halt the building process, at least temporarily. To move forward without the solutions already evident would be to compromise the animals in a way that no member of the moral community should have to experience. We would never just bulldoze a person's land and expect them to flee until they can find another home. Inclusion argues that we cannot do that to animals either.

I am aware that this will take the re-imagining of how we currently build things. I would argue that industry changes with technology and information quite frequently. Would it really be so impossible for the movements of industry to be towards considering the situations and needs of the beings that already live in a place? Science as well will

probably need time to catch up. A new system will require deeper understandings of ecological processes than we currently have. As science uncovers new information, industry would need to adapt. This would also require a change in zoning and laws. I assert again that change may take a while and be a somewhat rocky process, but it is not impossible. More importantly the systems currently in place need to change to reflect the needs of existents involved in the problems. There is a chance the subdivision would never be built, because like in the spider example, we must have a reason to violate the moral standing of any member of the group, as well as ways to minimize the harm. All those involved would get consideration through the entire process.

But what can be done when existential needs conflict in an honest way that involves two existents trying to continue their existential project of staying alive? It would be idealistic to try to assert this never happens. If the needs of existents never conflicted then we would not need ethics in the first place. The conflicts inherent to meat eating are a good way to explore this issue. In some parts of the world it is simply not feasible to live on plants alone. Imagine tribespeople in the Kalahari Desert, a place with minimal land for growing plants as well as a lack of water for irrigation, attempting to shift to an entirely agrarian lifestyle. (Persistence) This is simply not possible. In particular we can see this problem as well as a solution if we look to the San People of the Kalahari and finally towards the ethics involved in meat eating.

The San of the Kalahari are a group that exists on both meat and vegetation. Whatever produce they eat is usually found by foraging. The desert simply will not support any sort of farming that would benefit individuals or the group in a meaningful way. Meat is also found in a similar way. The men of the tribe are in charge of finding

animals to eat. They practice persistence hunting, which is one of the oldest forms of hunting. The tribesmen actually stalk their prey over long distances for however long it takes the animal to give up the fight. (Persistence)

They generally follow the buck with the largest horns, not because it will look best hanging in their hut, or it earns them the most prestige, but because it will become tired the fastest. A small group will follow their prey for miles and for days. Usually the animal in question is an elk-like animal called a Kudu. They hunt the animal on its terms, respecting that animals struggle to retain its life. In the end the animal is killed when it is finally too tired to go any further. In following the animal until it gives up the hunter is also allowing the animal the chance to win the fight. The hunter even apologizes to the animal before he kills it. He understands that the animal did not want to die. The hunter is acknowledging that their existential pursuits of life have come into conflict and he expresses both sorrow in the situation and gratitude to the animal for being there.

(Persistence)

We can imagine the initial argument to take the life of kudu would have gone along the lines of “My tribe is going hungry so something must be done. The Kudu are plentiful, but are pursuing lives of their own. In taking this animal’s life, its struggle must be honored and the life that is ending must be respected by minimizing suffering.” In a situation where meat must be eaten for humans to survive, there is a way to do so respectfully. The animal was treated as a member of the community with a particular life and existence.

But what of places where meat eating is a choice based on preference and not on need? In modern first world economies it can be argued that meat eating and the use of

animals for luxury items such as clothing and furniture is unethical according to inclusion. Although there are rare medical conditions that require eating meat or its by-products to survive, the majority of arguments in this arena are based solely on human preference. It can be easily argued that we can absolutely provide for the nutritional needs of most of our citizens through things that can be grown. We have the resources and the space to do so, but people like the way meat taste, so they feel entitled to it. Starting from a point of exclusion for the past several hundred years has facilitated this problem. If we remember that one of the tenets of inclusions is that you cannot exclude a being from consideration solely based on a human preference then we are left with a large scale cruelty situation.

It would be appropriate to address the idea of cruelty free meat and those individuals that must have some form of it to survive because of a biological condition. Factory farming would not be an option because that would require mass suffering of members of the moral community when other options are feasible. While it is true that as individuals we should turn away from the practice of eating meat unless we have to have it to survive, we should also insure the freedom of those who need meat. This can be done in much the same way we already produce free-range meat that is allowed to eat what it needs and follow its particular instincts in its pursuit of existence. If those of us who did not need meat refrained from buying it, then the amount of farms doing this would be appropriate for the number of people who biologically need meat.

We should also address the old argument that we can only get certain forms of protein from meat and we are unhealthy without them. Not only is this based on a solely human preference, but one does not even need to turn to science to see that this argument

is incorrect. You only need to look at the Asian world, which has a largely plant based diet. It would be hard to say that these groups have always been unhealthy or sick. In fact, Dr. T. Colin Campbell found that in Thailand children on the upper levels of the socio-economic ladder whose families were able to afford meat regularly were sixty percent more likely to develop liver cancer than the children who did not eat meat. He also found significantly lower rates of diabetes and cancer in China for those who ate a vegetarian diet. (Campbell)

If we do also include the science what we have is some very alarming research that indicates not only is the belief that we need to eat meat untrue (Havala 480), but that meat consumption is actually somewhat bad for some of us, and overconsumption is bad for all. Most of us are aware that there is a correlation in most people between varying types of heart disease, such as coronary artery disease and high cholesterol, and red meat consumption. The only proven way to reverse the problem without drugs is to actually go on a completely vegetarian diet. It should also be noted that drugs do not yield the same success Dr. Dean Ornish has had with a completely plant based diet. (*Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease*) It would seem meat consumption in the western world is an unethical choice for both the meat eater and the animal intended to be dinner.

In addition to what we know about heart disease, there is also the phenomenon of sedentary diseases that are typically associated with first world economies. Dr. T. Colin Campbell and Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn were recently the subject of a documentary entitled *Forks Over Knives* because of their research into how meat and dairy based diets play into things like diabetes and cancer. Dr. Campbell is a researcher at Cornell and Dr. Esselstyn is head of the breast cancer task force at the Cleveland Clinic. They looked at

elimination of meat in the diet and what effects it had on disease. What their studies found by studying world population and patterns of meat eating in numerous studies during the last thirty years was that eliminating meat and meat based products lowered cancer rates. It also lowered the rates of type 2 diabetes. In countries where meat eating is on the rise, so are diseases of the sedentary first world. Their research indicates that lowering the consumption rate back down can reverse the problems popping up.

(Campbell)

We have discussed the idea of mistreatment of animals from the point of view of the animal, but how has excluding them from the ethical landscape affected humans adversely? In ignoring their place in intersubjectivity and the idea of interdependent systems we have actually caused problems for ourselves. We have brought disease to humans and environmental problems to the world, not to mention that as we build our essence, our acceptance of cruelty has had less than desirable results. We can look once again at meat consumption in the western world to understand this. Specifically we will examine the factory farm situations of cows and pigs.

By even placing these animals into factory farms we are ignoring their particular needs as they pursue their existence. Cows are biologically designed to eat grass. In factory farm settings they are fed corn because it is more cost efficient and gets them to terminal weight faster. Feeding them corn has two direct effects on humans. Both of them relate to a change in the PH balance of any cows four stomachs. (Wright 1) This change in internal chemistry that happens as a result of not really having a cud to chew ends in a much higher level of bacteria in the cow that is harmful to both human and animal. Cows are given antibiotics as a preventative measure to protect against this. (Bielo)

The antibiotics are a twofold problem. Over time the bacteria in cows has become resistant to them, so we have some very nasty things lurking around that humans can catch such as Salmonella. (Fey) A boy who had Salmonella was tested and the strain was identified as having come from a cow. It was in the meat and had survived the antibiotics the cow was given because it had mutated due to antibiotic resistance. (Fey 1242) This brings us to the second problem. Because humans are ingesting the antibiotics that the cows consume, we are becoming somewhat tolerant of the antibiotics and the range of bacteria that we used to treat with antibiotics is itself becoming more resistant. Everything is modifying itself to a point where antibiotics are losing their effectiveness. (Fey 1248)

We are spreading disease and compromising our ability to cure it by ignoring what cows need in their existential pursuit. Hence, by ignoring the moral status of cows as moral patients, we harm not only them but also ourselves. When we look at pigs we can find direct examples of how the workers in factory pig farms are engaging in cruel practices that debase all life. It would seem they are creating themselves as beings who have lost touch with the idea that whatever behavior they embrace says something about what they are choosing to become. Workers at a pig farm in Iowa were caught on camera beating and torturing pigs by slamming heads on the ground, cutting them, castrating them when no order was given, as well as cutting off tails. These things were generally done in a group setting with workers encouraging each other and laughing. (Cartier)

Interestingly enough the pigs are not really protected by current Iowa animal cruelty laws because they are not actually owned by anyone but the factory farm. They are not considered in a legal equation because as farm animals they are basically a

product and the workers are agents of the owners. If they did have external owners and the owners had suffered a loss as a result of the cruelty, then the person being cruel would be liable legally. (Cartier) The Kantian line of animal standing still holds sway today. The animal is only considered in terms of who happens to own it at the time of the abuse.

The implications of accepting an inclusive theory are far reaching. Factory farming would have to stop because no member of the community of ethical members can be expected to live in those circumstances. It is not a situation such as the one the San and the Kudu are locked in. Countries that have the land and resources to participate in factory farms could convert those same resources towards humane raising of animals intended for consumption by those individuals that have to have meat to survive. They can then the rest of the land used in factory farms as well as the land used to grow the massive amounts of corn for factory farms and dedicate that to growing other sources of protein like legumes and whole grains.

The use of animals for decorative or entertainment purposes would have to be halted. There is almost no basis for using fur and leather in clothing under an inclusive theory. Perhaps the by-products from the few farms still raising meat to fulfill the needs of those who physically need it would have a case to let those make it to the marketplace, but overall, wanting to look good is not the type of problem of existence that should be allowed to end another being's project of surviving. However, it is entirely possible though that persons who live in an area where animal fur and by products are essential for survival might be able to make convincing arguments that would allow for the humane killing of certain species. The Inuit tribes in the far northern hemispheres of the planet come to mind. The fat from animals is often the only source of fire they have and fur the



only thing that was available for warmth. While this has changed for some areas, there are still other tribes where the old ways are still the only way to guarantee survival.

Almost all hunting outside of that which must occur from food would need to cease. The idea that hunting needs to happen to stabilize populations or to restrict growth of a certain group is largely based on what humans want. (*Analysis and Management of Animal Populations*) It is often the case that humans develop land and then look at the animals that live there as the problem. If a farmer develops land and then puts chickens on it that end up getting eaten by coyotes, who is really at fault here? Couldn't it be argued that the coyote lived there first and was actually doing nothing different? The change in the environment was introduced by humans. Is it fair that the coyote pay the price? This is not intended to be an argument that supports farmers being wiped out financially. There are answers out there to this problem. They may take a little more effort or money than killing the offending coyote, but cost and time is no reason to negate the ethical treatment of existential beings.

A theory of inclusion would advocate that the farmer be aware of the coyotes before he buys the land. It would require that the farmer look at the coyote as a being worthy of moral consideration. This would mean a humane solution to the problem. There are several remedies for this situation that would give consideration to both sides. The farmer could have possibly bought other land or decided to grow corn and not chickens. The farmer could also engage in some sort of measures to deter or block the animal from getting onto the property. There is also the option of moving animals instead of killing them.

Sport hunting would be totally eliminated. There is possibly no higher devaluing of life than to have someone pay just for the privilege of killing something. A creature involved in an existential pursuit of existence should never be expected to give that up just because someone has enough money chase it and put a bullet through its head. Most often sport hunting in the United States does not involve any sort of pursuit. Deer are lured by food to a small area and shot by a hunter who is no more than a few feet away. The instinctive need to feed itself that all beings have is used against it.

The argument that the entire animal is used also holds little weight in arguments against sport hunting. This is because sport hunting in the western world is not about feeding people that are not starving, or desperately in need of food. Sport hunting is exactly what it claims to be, a sport. Someone who was actually so poor as to not be able to afford food would have a problem being able to afford the licenses and equipment needed to hunt. If the main motivator for sport hunting is prestige of the kill, then neither of those very human centered traits would be acceptable within an existential animal inclusion framework.

An existential exclusion theory also has limits concerning how far we must go in considering other members. A theory of inclusion would not demand that you sacrifice yourself if you are under attack. If my life or safety, or the lives and safety of those I am responsible for, comes under assault from either human or animal, I am not expected to give in and die. On the contrary, if two subjects' base existential project of continuing their existence comes into such direct and unavoidable conflict, then each is allowed to try to win its side. I am permitted to fight off and possibly injure or kill an attacking dog,

in just the same way I would a human attacking me. In questions of life and death we have the right to act in our favor.

We have seen in this chapter that existentialism and inclusion puts all beings with a drive to survive automatically inside the group worthy of moral consideration. This encompasses almost all life on the planet and all systems. This theory is not so dogmatic as to be able to resolve crisis when basic existential pursuits come into conflict. It is a system that requires arguments at each step of an ethical dilemma in order to impose on the ethical standing of any members. At times this could mean the loss of one being's or group's life in favor of another's, but this decision should never be made without a deep consideration of all involved. This includes an even starting point and nonbiased particular consideration of the needs of all who have a chance of being impacted by the decision.

## VI. CONCLUSION

My initial concerns in this work centered on the absence of animals from independent ethical consideration. The impact of that stance has been a long history of mistreatment and cruelty to animals. While some earlier works in philosophy considered the status of animals in arguments, those same arguments never worked in favor of animals. They were all indirect theories in that the animal was always considered as an object in relation to humans. These theories usually held up a human-like criterion that an animal had to meet, or they were never considered part of the ethical landscape. I have argued that the criterion in question usually had a strong element of arbitrariness to it such as reason or a will.

More modern ethical theory has given animals consideration on their own terms, thereby making a move towards valuing what the animal itself is. Still, these theories tend to have an element of arbitrariness in the qualities they consider necessary to be included. It would be fair to point out that some may be inclined to raise the same criticism at the arguments presented here as far as the use of the Other.

While application of the Other seems to have an arbitrary quality to it in the continuum of all life, it should be remembered that it is existence precedes essence and the idea of an existential project of living that is essential for membership in the circle of moral consideration. Even if an animal or any other life form cannot reflect, this does not mean it is automatically out of the group. There must be argument and sound reasons. It

has already been stated that not having this ability may give strength to the arguments to remove status in a particular situation, but it can never be used to eliminate any life form permanently from the equation of ethical fairness. Nor does the lack of this ability erase the need for an argument against the being.

It would also be appropriate to mention another possible criticism of this theory in that by eliminating reason as a criterion for moral membership, we have robbed humans of that thing that is particularly unique: our ability to consider moral questions. I do not deny that reason gives humans a distinct view of the ethical landscape that animals do not have. I do argue against the idea that reason is distinctly human, for we know, as explained earlier in this work, that it is not.

I also argue that as beings that possess that distinct view we carry a deeper responsibility because we are capable of seeing the ethical implications involved in a situation. A higher sense of reason is not something to be used to explain why we should be able to bend things to our will; it should not be used as a tool to excuse the use of force, or acts of cruelty, on either human or animal. The arguments here are also not intended to debase humans or to take away their uniqueness. I am simply arguing that existential problems are pre-existent to reason.

A theory of inclusion based on the existential ideas of existence precedes essence, the Other, and intersubjectivity, allows us to avoid the charges raised at the beginning of this work as far as arbitrariness and lack of recognition of the importance of systems. It would give us a system that would allow for all beings involved in life to be given moral standing. It provides a baseline that is attainable for all living things, not just a few certain groups.

Inclusion also does not expect us to sacrifice our basic existential pursuits as humans. My life and well-being are just as important as the others in my ethical community. Inclusion is first about granting everyone a seat at the table of ethical consideration, and then about dialogue when members needs come into conflict. At its heart it recognizes the validity of every being's pursuit of life.

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