



*every sentient being.* Consider that one person's pain is only experienced by that person—even if it happens to matter to somebody else. It is absurd to disagree with this proposition since otherwise we would literally share each others' pains. According to this view, what is best in general includes—separately—what is best for you, me, this sentient being, that sentient being, etc., until we have considered what is best for each and every individual involved.

(5) *The best is ideally all-good, or excludes what is bad.* Otherwise we have the absurdity that it is not preferable to have only good, or better to allow what is bad—even if we can avoid it. “Bad,” of course, is no mere abstraction. The term encompasses forms of suffering from fish suffocating in agony out of water to the routine de-beaking of chicks without anesthesia (see above photo).

These hypotheses are true for endless sunrises and sunsets. Is this then a “fact sheet”? Regardless, these five simple, absolute, easily defended ideas are enough to make good a case for animal rights without “intuitions.”

That is because the implication of these five hypotheses is that it is best in general to exclude bad or harm for all sentient beings. Excluding all bad or harm logically entails a rejection of all exploitation and oppression. This is the essence of animal rights according to our simplified model.

Furthermore, since what is best for each and every individual is upheld, we can rule out vivisection. No one can say that vivisection is best for the one who is vivisected, since again the best excludes avoidable harms. It is best to respect the best in general, or for everybody. By contrast, in true dilemmas, unlike vivisection, we can aim for the best for some but not for all.

Now this simplified case for animal rights would be an oversimplification if it were left as is. A serious case for animal rights would require a full justification that includes a more detailed defence of the above hypotheses among others, a rebuttal to major objections, and in fact a ruling out of competing theories. But we can still offer people a simplified case for animal rights as we have done in this short essay in a way that is convincing, challenging to objectors, and clear enough to be stated briefly.

### **Conclusion: Advocating Animal Rights**

Disagreeing with the five hypotheses—and so animal rights itself—results in absurdities. That is a far cry from the conventional picture that animal rights is ridiculous. Such popular myth is mere prejudice, even as is speciesism itself—an irrational injustice like racism or sexism. We cannot seriously affirm liberation itself without endorsing animal liberation.

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# Animal Rights Made Simple

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### **Introduction: the Value of Simplicity**

It is highly desirable to make a simple case for animal rights. Simplicity is elegant, as well as more easily communicated and debated. It is challenging, however, to present a simplified case that is convincing, and not merely declared dogmatically without proper justification. We might do well to stick to the scientific method of considering evidence for hypotheses, although whether the result is “scientific” is another matter.

We cannot simply “intuit,” as Tom Regan does in *The Case for Animal Rights*, that animals have inherent value and thus are not to be exploited. For other people intuit contrary views, and we cannot use intuition to decide between conflicting intuitions without ending up back where we started—with a deadlock of opposing prejudices.

## Clarifying Animal Rights

No complete definition can be given in simple terms. However, one thing common to animal rights generally is the abolition of animal exploitation. This oversimplifies whether only abolitionist laws may be best in the short-term for animal rightists to advocate, but still serves as a model of animal rights.



Pigs before slaughtering

Exploitation is, in large part, harming animals in the ways in which we use them, for example, killing animals for food, harming them for medical research, maintaining sheep in impoverished settings to shear their wool, fur farms, trapping, hunting, and punishing animals to force them to perform tricks for human amusement in circuses, while offstage they languish in squalid living conditions.



Cat in researcher's "stereotaxic device"

We can distinguish between positive and negative rights. Positive rights secure good things. For example, an adequate animal rights framework would result in animals being allowed treats and amusements on animal sanctuaries, even if they would not in all cases suffer in the absence of such positive benefits. Negative rights are rights to be spared from bad things or harms. People are more unanimous about avoiding bad things, and so that will be the focus of this brief analysis.

Another aspect besides negative rights is the dignity of the individual. This opposes, say, the classic utilitarian argument that the good of society overwhelms the rights of individuals in the case of animal experimentation. Utilitarians think the good of the many can outweigh the good of the one.

Can animal rights in this simplified sense of negative rights to individual dignity be justified straightforwardly?

## Justifying Animal Rights

Best caring is my own theory, and it includes several relevant hypotheses:

(1) *We should aim for the best.* To argue the opposite is absurd since there is only better than the best (impossible), or worse than the best (which no one could say is truly better). Note that the remaining hypotheses, (2)-(5), are simply specifications of what it means to uphold the best in general.

(2) *The best means the most good and the least bad.* The opposite is impossible since any less good or more bad would be worse than the best.

(3) *Good and bad are realities for sentient beings which we can know without intuitions.* Using "emotional awareness," we can know that pain always feels bad, even for masochists. It would be unbelievable to argue that pain in itself feels good or indifferent.

(4) *Good, bad, and the best are separately significant for each and*



Rabbits immobilized for "Draize Test" which involves dripping toxins into their eyes