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BIOETHICAL SENSIBILITY TOWARDS THE STATUS OF ANIMALS AND THEIR RIGHTS

Abstract

Man is a moral and conscious being. His role in the natural context is the care and preservation of nature with the aim of achieving natural balance. On a global level, bioethics, as a scientific discipline, assumes this role in developing and preserving nature, plants, and animals. The ethicality of man is reflected in his care, sensitivity, and sensibility towards nature, life, birth, and death. For ethics to be realized, every individual must become aware of their morality. The moral consciousness of man is manifested in various life contexts. Likewise, man's morality is also reflected in his treatment of animals. Animals, as beings or as non-human animals, deserve the care and compassion of man. How animals are perceived as essential participants in the natural hierarchy depends on each individual. Do animals represent equal members of the natural community, or are animals merely means to satisfy various human interests? Do people think about preserving the Earth when mass breeding of domestic animals is encouraged and developed? The importance of animal welfare and respect for laws protecting them can be discerned from human actions. Greenhouse gases caused by mass animal breeding raise questions about the moral justification of such practices in the social and academic community. Is meat consumption considered a

necessary need to feed and sustain the human population, or is it a matter of human interest and choice? The choice and selection of lifestyle in this busy and modern world are solely up to us. With knowledge, motivation, perseverance, love, care, respect, and sensitivity towards nature, the environment, plants, and animals, we can make this world healthier and more beautiful for all of us.

■ **Keywords:** bioethics, man, morality, animals

Introductory considerations - understandings of bioethics and ethics

Comparing humans to animals should not be sensitive. From a philosophical standpoint, environmental issues and harm to the system and animals have arisen due to human actions. Man, as a moral being, can view ethics from two perspectives. The first is the deontological standpoint, which sees ethics as a set of moral rules one should adhere to. The second standpoint of ethics is consequentialist, among which the most famous direction is utilitarianism, which believes that if such action occurs, the outcome must be equal happiness for all parties (Singer, 1999).

Defining the word “life,” Italian jurist, aesthetics professor, and publicist Giorgio Agamben (1942) mentions two directions in which the word “zoe” is defined as a general word for the life of all forms of life, while the word “bios” is defined exclusively as human life. Guided by this definition, if the word “bioethics” were to be defined in this way, it would refer to the ethics of human life, while the word “zooethics” would refer to the ethics of the animal world (Jurić, 2015). In the modern worldview, animals cannot be classified as beings entitled to life. Pythagorean reflections, which differ from Western philosophies, consider all living beings with a soul to be related. According to their considerations, animals have souls, so they should not be consumed as food. Unlike animals, plants do not possess a soul but rather life, so they can be consumed. Many animals have been considered sacred animals, and some were work animals that were not allowed to be killed (Kaluderović and Jašić, 2015). Life in Pythagorean communities is based on the belief that man is related to other living beings, so he is related to animals. Animals are living beings and should, therefore, not be consumed. Such consideration is based on the belief that if animal meat is consumed, it is easy to eat one’s ancestor whose soul has transferred to an animal form. In other tribes, various prohibitions were noticeable, which caused people not to consume meat. They strictly adhered to them without mere beliefs and deeper meanings (Kaluderović, 2017).

Bioethics is a science that deals with various topics, such as preserving and enhancing human life, nature, species preservation, and sustainable development (Rinčić Lerga, 2007). Today, bioethics is defined as care and compassion for life, the environment, and animals (Kaluderović and Jašić, 2015). Bioethics covers various complex problems and has therefore developed and survived in different areas. Theoretical ethics examines moral theories and provisions. Clinical ethics examines the ethics towards patients and their treatment. Legal and political bioethics try to sensitize society with all accompanying regulations and laws that society should adhere to. Cultural bioethics studies the cultural context of society (Rinčić Lerga, 2007). Bioethics as an interdisciplinary field requires the integration of different viewpoints. Bioethics aims to achieve balance within the entire system and society. Ethics deals with finding optimal moral values (Agazzi, 2007). Such a need to achieve balance was noticed with the emergence of kidney dialysis devices. There was commotion and inquiries about who would and how justly rank patients and determine those who are a priority. Based on that event, the establishment of an ethics committee that decided on medical ethics and practice emerged (Zagorac and Jurić, 2008; Rinčić Lerga, 2007).

Bioethics finds its roots in the early 1960s in the United States. It emerged as a movement of moral dilemmas and decisions of scientists and doctors about life. Looking back in history, similar upheavals occurred around events related to nuclear activities and their negative impacts on human life and the environment in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In these upheavals, advocates like Bertrand Russell and Günther Anders stood out. A more recent history provides a detailed overview of the emergence and development of bioethics (Zagorac and Jurić, 2008). Bioethics emerged in 1971 in “Bioethics – Bridge to the Future” (Rinčić Lerga, 2007). The pioneer of bioethics was Van Rensselaer Potter, a biochemist, oncologist, and author of the mentioned book. The importance of Fritz Jahr, a German theologian and Protestant pastor who devoted his work to religious and philosophical issues of public and private morality, is worth mentioning. He found inspiration in the fifth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”, and complemented it with Kant’s categorical imperative. The bioethical imperative advocates for survival in different cultural and natural conditions and includes solidarity, love, and compassion for all life forms. Ethics is founded on sensitivity and solidarity towards all living forms (Kos, 2014). Fritz Jahr had such reflections that he believed humans, animals, and plants have similar rights, although these rights are not equal (Jurić, 2015). Immanuel Kant believed that human morality actually depends on freedom of will and can be interpreted as a

kind of ideal (Grubišić, 2012). According to Kant's imperative, Jahr's categorical imperative refers to the bioethical humanity of human relations to others and all living beings, including animals. Kant's imperative applies to every living being, including animals. Respect and treat the animal as an end in itself (Jurić, 2015). As important as Jahr's imperative, Jonas's imperative made an equally significant contribution. Hans Jonas contributed to the development of bioethics by attempting to promote philosophical biology as an integrative philosophy of life. The philosophy of nature is based on scientific and theological reflections. Jonas tried to abolish imposed limitations related to the external and internal world and developed his anti-dualistic movement. Freedom exists in both humans and animals. His philosophy dictates that all living beings are worth existing, and humans have a moral duty to enable this (Jurić, 2015). Albert Schweitzer contemplates life as something possible and something one should adhere to. Life is given to us all, as is the will to live, and we must not destroy it but encourage it (Jurić, 2015).

Bioethics extends its foundations to global-ecological dimensions. In the Anglo-American region, bioethics finds its roots in the biomedical field. Many authors define bioethics as an interdisciplinary science that touches on social, political, cultural, economic, human assumptions and many other areas of relationships with nature. Bioethics observes the ethics of human beings, their actions towards nature, and all other moral issues related to human life, birth, and death. From all these areas, the diversity permeating bioethics is evident and can rightfully be unified under one name: integrative bioethics. Integrative bioethics nurtures bioethical sensitivity (Jurić, 2007). Bioethics soon developed into other areas of global and ecological issues. Such expansion introduced bioethics to Croatia in 1996 at higher education institutions and departments of medicine in Rijeka. This was contributed by the publication of the work in the journal "Društvena istraživanja" by author Ivan Šegota in collaboration with other authors. This publication prompted a series of new domestic and foreign research and spurred the expansion of bioethical education to all other higher education institutions. Bioethics continued to spread at scientific conferences such as "Days of Frane Petrić" held in Cres, followed by "Lošinj Days of Bioethics" held in Mali Lošinj (Zagorac and Jurić, 2008).

Following the concepts of biological egalitarianism, every being holds value. As highly positioned members of the earthly community, humans exert greater rights and dominion over other living beings. Adhering to deontological ethics, humans care for plants and animals. According to utilitarianism, humans depend

on subjects who are lower-positioned in the natural hierarchy. This confirms the interdependence between humans and nature. In an ethical position of emotiveness, humans are social beings who show concern for nature. The existence of an environment that shapes the relationship between humans and nature is also evident (Zagorac and Jurić, 2008).

Animals

Animals are beings capable of emotions. They are intelligent and capable of experiencing both positive and negative emotions (Wemelsfelder and Mullan, 2014). Subjective or emotional experiences in animals are formed by environmental sensory stimuli manifesting in the animal's internal states. Animal experiences are defined as systems that lead to action or specific animal behaviour. The content of the experience can be negative or positive for the animal. Fear, anger, and panic are considered negative experiences for animals, while comfort, vitality, euphoria, and playfulness are considered positive experiences (Mellor, 2012).

Are humans more important than animals? Humans often cite and explain differences between animals and themselves, especially regarding care or attention. They often argue that human life is more valuable than animal life. According to these claims, two principles are evident in humans' arguments that human life is more important than animal life. The first principle is the principle of the significance of interests. In contrast, the second principle is the principle of life, in which human life is considered more valuable than animal life. By considering human interests more important than those of animals, the observer is placed in a decisive role. The observer should offer the most moral answer, considering that it will favour humans over animals, thus prioritizing human interests. The deciding factor in this dilemma is the factor of belonging to a species. The human species holds greater significance. It is human to provide privileges to their own species and their interests rather than those of another species. In this way, humans legitimize themselves as members of a particular species. Despite all the research and arguments about animals as equal beings, humans still demean them, underestimate their abilities and talents, and, most importantly, humans abuse their power over animals (Bernstein, 2015). The concept of equality applies to all equally. Such a concept should also apply to the equal rights of all beings, especially when it comes to suffering. Only sensitivity cannot be considered in terms of whether a being can feel suffering. The observer's personal interest should not influence the answer. If the observer is a

member of the human species, it is clear that the answer will favour their own species. This mode of thinking is characteristic of speciesists, who discriminate based on their own species. How can one correctly and fairly decide who suffers more and when? To determine this, it must be clear whether it is considered that a being suffers or, instead, the level of mental abilities or self-interest is considered (Singer, 1999). Freedom can be defined from several perspectives as an inner feeling or freedom of will. Then, freedom as external limitation from the other. Christine Korsgaard, in her reflections, states that animals, despite their intelligence, do not have autonomy because they cannot understand their actions, which is the only way to autonomy (Kendrick, 2018). Autonomy is defined as the ability to choose and make one's own decisions. Human beings are rational beings with autonomy. Beings that cannot choose whether to live or die can autonomously choose life. Anyone who kills a person who does not want to die has committed the most severe form of violation of that person's autonomy (Singer, 1999).

The views of St. Thomas Aquinas between nature and theology show how non-human entities exist to enhance the well-being of overall human civilization. Animals are resources that will enable spiritual well-being and provide sustenance for humans. The parameters of this tradition depict anthropocentrism, which has led to centuries of animal suffering. Additionally, according to Thomas Aquinas, a hierarchical order exists that will bring better position to some. He believes that the lowest form is the vegetative soul without sensation, followed by the sensitive soul and rational soul. Animals are classified as sensitive souls because they lack the ability to rationalize. The human soul possesses all three mentioned souls, making it the most comprehensive (McLaughlin, 2014). According to ethical systematization, there are several hierarchy levels of the subworld and its consequences. One level states that beings that are not of the human species belong to higher animals. Human sensitivity is more developed towards animals than plants (Cifrić, 2000).

Western tradition considers the world to be subordinate to humans, and God has entrusted all dominion to humans, allowing them to use plants and animals for their benefit. It is only wrong if such actions harm humans. Humans, as such rulers, can also be wasteful. Waste, for example, can be associated with food. Most grains are used by humans to feed domestic animals, of which there are three times more than there are humans on Earth. This is just one example of many ways in which humans harm the environment by feeding on meat instead of embracing a plant-based diet (Singer, 2003). Humans can control some animals

but not others. When it comes to controlling animals, can such a procedure be considered ethical? Well-intentioned control aims to help the animal achieve what it may not be able to do on its own. As such, it is considered ethical control. Malicious control does not provide any benefit to the animal. On the contrary, it goes against the interests of the animal. For example, restricting movement and confining animals deprives them of freedom (Johnson, 2018). Modern humans strive to preserve nature rather than dominate it. Humans have a share of responsibility towards non-human animals. Such responsibility is also present within the framework of animal ethics. Human responsibility towards animals is divided into moral, political, and legal responsibility. The Lošinj Declaration established political and legal responsibility towards animals under the concept of bioethical sovereignty, which arose in opposition to GMO production. In addition to these responsibilities, it is worth mentioning philonic responsibility, which is equal to moral responsibility. This means that animals should be used only as an end, never as a means (Čović, 2009).

Social understandings that align with the modern world change as societal norms change. Consequently, human attitudes towards animals are also changing (Wemelsfelder and Mullan, 2014).

Can animal husbandry be just?

When discussing justice towards animals, we can contemplate how fair humans are when juxtaposing them between pets, domestic animals, and wild animals in a zoo. Therefore, one can question the utility of captive animals in a zoo. Do they bring any benefit to humans? Based on this, it is necessary to further examine whether it is justified and fair to do that to animals. If we restrict the movement of animals and keep them in confined spaces, are we doing them good? If we provide them with food, water, and care for them, does that constitute animal abuse? Can wild animals also live and survive in the wilderness without us keeping them captive in a zoo? They usually live in the wild in their natural habitat. Humans have altered their habitat for their own interests (Zamir, 2007). Such and similar considerations also apply to the breeding of domestic animals. Animal husbandry on farms is attracting increasing attention from philosophers and scientists. Primarily, consideration is given to the welfare of animals raised on farms. As end users of the meat produced, consumers want to know how and in what way the meat was raised. Producers have different views regarding animal welfare, but they are aware that production costs increase as animal production and breeding aimed at animal welfare increase (Olynk, 2012). Due to the high

consumption of meat, intensive animal farming is necessary. The term “intensive farming” evokes associations with a large number of animals confined to limited space. Unfortunately, this is the reality. Such farming leads to increasing mutual injuries among animals caused by cramped conditions. This is understandable because fattened animals will be constantly fearful of other animals. Therefore, frequent injuries occur. Injuries to intensively farmed pigs are caused by mutual ear and tail biting. In order to put an end to this, producers pull the pigs’ tusks in order to reduce future injuries (Kaluderović, 2009). Can this be justified by the fact that animals suffer differently from humans? As experts claim, this difference arises from the discriminatory difference in cognitive and emotional abilities. Such research focuses on the social and academic level regarding ethical and moral justification (Arnason, 2017).

Animal husbandry is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gases (Shields and Orme-Evans, 2015). Some studies show that greenhouse gases are higher when it comes to meat production and carnivore diet than when it comes to vegetarian or vegan diets. The effect that could help is manifested by reducing meat consumption (Wemelsfelder and Mullan, 2014). It is necessary to consider alternative strategies to reduce the effects of climate change. Many alternative solutions do not support the welfare of animals, such as confining a large number of animals in cramped spaces. Nor are the conditions under which animals are kept made for the purpose of animal welfare. Another argument against such farming cites the use of hormonal drugs given to animals to achieve greater productivity in human production. When introducing and considering such alternative solutions, greater attention should be paid to animal welfare, and greater effort should be put into aligning animal welfare and climate preservation (Shields and Orme-Evans, 2015). The introduction of any improvements, even considering animal welfare in farming, requires knowledge of the farming system and animal welfare from different domains, such as veterinary medicine, ethology, and many others. Every reform, including industrial production reform, depends on the social context and social ethics. Every reform should enable producers to balance their current costs by selling animal products (Thompson, 2020). As mentioned earlier, intensive animal farming refers to the fattening of a large number of animals crowded together. Such farming has consequences for both animals and farmers. Possible animal diseases and slower animal growth are possible. This is then projected into poorer meat quality and reduced milk production. In order to reduce such and similar consequences, a type of farming is introduced that follows animal behaviour and reactions to

reduce possible stress among animals. This farming method has a drawback regarding intervention systems (Cooke, 2021). Animal husbandry will never be sustainable until animals are seen as beings that need to have a dignified life that meets the health and other needs of animals. Animal husbandry and production systems are being increasingly criticized by critics from countries leading large meat corporations (Wemelsfelder and Mullan, 2014).

Veterinary experts must be well-versed in animal surgical techniques and pathology, but the question arises regarding how much they know about animal welfare. This issue is brought up by the study mentioned above, which shows the inclusion of courses with topics on bioethics and animal welfare in faculties of related fields. However, the results do not show sufficient awareness among future veterinary experts. Guided by and following the social context of the modern world, it is necessary to enrich courses at faculties to stimulate the awareness of students and the entire society so that they can conscientiously defend every form of life, advocate and promote rights for life, and encourage humanity to act more humanely towards animals (Uliana et al., 2019). A disturbing fact, along with the lack of knowledge about animal welfare, also applies to the exploitation of animals for testing cosmetic products. Is it not enough that animals are already used for intensive farming, killed, and slaughtered for human interests? Do they need to be sacrificed for testing products as well? With all the cosmetic products produced so far, do we think we need it for human life and its existence? When conducting such research, does the principle of equality apply to all living beings? (Singer, 1999). Nor do animals used in experiments aimed at standardizing doses in human treatment fare any better (Kaluderović, 2009).

Animals in research

In addition to intensive animal farming, animals are used in many scientific research endeavours. Scientists and researchers believe this to be correct and necessary for scientific advancements, especially in the field of neuroscience. In their reports, scientists explain such research's medical and scientific benefits but do not address the ethical foundations regarding animals, specifically non-human primates. The research was morally necessary with the least possible harm because such research brings significant achievements and benefits to the human population. This is just one drop in the ocean of justifications for such research. Guided by such assertions, there is a necessary shift in understanding such research on non-human primates. If research is not conducted on non-human primates, it will have significant consequences for the human population (Arnason, 2017).

There is increasing debate about the ethics of human research and the ethics of animals in such research. Is there any justification for such research at all? Many considerations by different authors agree that animals have the ability to feel pain just as humans do. Are the same rights applied equally to humans and animals? Research ethics speaks volumes about this. Through research ethics discussions, defending the previous question would involve considering the moral status dependent on the cognitive abilities of non-human primates. Animal research ethics are still not separate concepts but are embedded in research ethics composed of laws and regulations, professional codes, rules, and prescribed procedures. Today's regulations on the use of animals in research are tied to reducing animal suffering only in cases of advancing new scientific and medical achievements. The most well-known standpoint on animal ethics is advocated by Peter Singer (Arnason, 2020). Future considerations about animals worthy of moral consideration and assigning moral status relate to vertebrate animal species. Vertebrates are the only animal species capable of feeling and suffering. There are two opposing views on animals. On the one hand, are the utilitarians led by Singer, and on the other hand are opposing views presented in the theories of Tom Regan (DeGrazia, 1991). Regan believes that human well-being and animal welfare do not differ significantly. He states that individuals who can morally act and deliberate are called moral agents. As such, they are responsible for their actions. He calls moral patients individuals who cannot control their behaviour, cannot morally judge, and if they harm others, they cannot be characterized as cruel and evil. He also believes that animals are moral patients and that humans, as moral agents, have no obligations towards them and, thus, no right to harm them. He believes that if there are moral viewpoints that do not protect either humans or animals, they cannot be classified as a moral theory. Regan holds the view that if we torture someone, we harm them. We owe justice to that being because, as such, it has the right to its well-being. Kant has a different perspective. He believes that moral agents do good independent of any benefit and that every action, whether out of duty or not, has moral value. Regarding animals, he believes that we have no obligations. Animals are means that serve humans to fulfil their purposes (Marić, 2010).

The common goal among all of us is to prevent animals from experiencing cruelty, with which everyone can agree. Guided by this premise, discussing the cruelties towards animals that can be tolerated is undeniable. Are there any cruelties that are acceptable to us and those that are not? Objections to such and similar reflections are clear regarding perceiving human morality. The extent to

which humans exhibit greater and more pronounced morality towards animals will be guided by the same principles towards all living beings. If a human considers it right to refuse the sacrifice of an animal for any personal benefit, they will demonstrate their side of morality towards animals. If an animal is sacrificed, what benefit does it bring to humans? Deciding what is more correct is truly difficult. When we touch upon the debate about consuming animal products and achieving benefits for animals, can this be achieved without harming them? We harm the animal by keeping it captive, thus not doing anything good for it. Reflecting on this, is it fairer to use animal products only from free-range animal husbandry? (Zamir, 2007). Humans' humane treatment of animals relates to reducing pain to animals if we use them to meet human needs and interests. Humans do not fully adhere to these laws, and they interfere with the lives of non-human animals by using their power of control. The power of control was historically established when the animal was considered legal property. An animal, as a non-legal personality, cannot have its own personal rights, while a human, as a rights holder, can possess a non-human animal. They can sell it and use it for experimentation and entertainment. However, changes have begun. Restrictions have been imposed on what humans cannot do to animals. The animal should be granted the status of a legal person because if animal welfare is to be respected, humans must be restricted from using animals as their property. Human and animal interests should be equal and free without possible limitations by humans exerting hierarchical superiority and domination. The first step in achieving this is to attribute the status of personhood to all living beings (Giroux and Saucier-Bouffard, 2018). Guidelines at the beginning of research and animal use start with an ethical question. The ethical question raised concerns about whether animals are necessary for this research type. When defining the research outcomes, it is necessary to consider all existing parameters related to the positive and negative welfare of animals and the possibilities of reducing all undesirable and unnecessary negative impacts (Cheluvappa, Scowen, and Eri, 2017). It is a fact that animals contribute significantly to science. Scientists use animals in experimental research to make progress and make new discoveries. Animals are anatomically similar to humans, so they can be used in research in the field of anatomy and physiology. On a global scale, regulations, principles, and guidelines have been established on how and in what way animals can be used in education and research. As history has changed, so have attitudes towards the ethics of using animals in experiments (Cheluvappa, Scowen, and Eri, 2017). A complete ban on the use of animals in scientific experiments has not yet dawned, but Western countries are introducing special rules. Such

research is mandated to minimize animal suffering. Referring to the previous statement, it is worth noting that the rules for using animals for scientific and medical purposes apply exclusively to the animal group of vertebrates (Popa et al., 2015). After presenting these claims, do we think similarly regarding fur production and fur coats, organizing rodeos, opening zoos, and selling pets? Do animals feel pain and helplessness then? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that all vertebrates have a nervous system similar to humans (Singer, 1999). Animals, like humans, have moral status and awareness. Tom Regan cites common-sense views of people as evidence of animal consciousness, which are consistent with language, the absence of assumptions about the immortality of the animal soul, animal behaviour towards their awareness, and the existence of the theory of evolution confirming the existence of animal consciousness (Marić, 2010).

Virtue ethics is a theory that advocates reflecting on how we behave towards all species, including animals. The theory advocates taking into account the virtues and vices of each animal towards which we act. We should not only consider the consequences and rights of animals. When we apply concepts such as virtues and vices to people, it is relatively easy for us. We characterize virtue as a good, valuable, and useful trait that we would like to have. A vice represents an unattractive quality and regret for the person who possesses it. Virtue ethics arises from the character of each individual. By applying virtue ethics to environmental and animal protection, humans can reflect on the cruelties inflicted on animals. They can contemplate what they are doing wrong in a broader sense and whether there is a possibility to stop consuming animals for their intrinsic desires and turn to vegetarianism (Hursthouse, 2012).

Can humans improve the World?

As moral beings, humans can reflect on similar cases that focus on animals' life and death. Animals in today's world are presented as resources. The life of an animal and the life of a human are not equated when it comes to the right to life. It is justified that an animal cannot consciously assume responsibility or fulfil its duties (Kaluderović, 2009). New revolutions bring with them new scientific understandings. As scientific achievements are complemented, so does people's awareness regarding the dignity of animals as non-human animals change. Animal rights are supported by the Environmental Protection Act, and in today's world, they should be more based on the principles of bioethics and animal freedom. It is urgently needed to devise a law closely related to animal rights and protection (Cardozo Dias and Salles, 2019).

When we ask whether animals have rights, we must consider these aspects from different perspectives. Objectively speaking, animals have rights concerning human treatment of animals. Humans are the factors responsible for the welfare of animals and for coexisting with animals (Nedić, 2018). The concept of animal welfare implies providing shelter, food, and care for the health of animals. Welfare also entails both the physical and, of course, the psychological state of the animal. Whether it is anxiety or other conditions, such as stress caused by threatening predators, humans are fully responsible for creating animal welfare (Hewson, 2003). Animal suffering is defined as discomfort in animals caused by one or more harmful stimuli and is contrary to animal welfare. Animal suffering can be projected as an emotional, mental, or physical unpleasant state (Ledger & Mellor, 2018). The following facts occur when animal welfare does not align with animal rights. Animals can be bred, used, and eaten as long as they do not suffer unnecessary pain or any form of cruelty towards them. Also, animals do not have legal personality because they are perceived as “things” or property. Speaking of rights implies that certain people have certain duties towards right holders that must be respected and not violated (Kurki, 2021).

The Animal Welfare Institute in the USA defines animal welfare and the concept of animal freedom. The concept of freedom is defined through several different concepts, referring to liberation from hunger, thirst, and discomfort, freedom from pain, injury, or illness, freedom to express normal behaviour, and freedom from fear and distress according to the UN Declaration (McCausland, 2014). The role of ethicists and ethical sciences in relation to animals has a significant impact. Ethicists could enrich research policy with their research and reflections. They can propose ways to raise awareness of the characteristics of other species appropriately and thus improve research involving animals as stakeholders. Such improvements aim to create greater welfare for animals and reduce possible harm that can be achieved using arguments from broader perspectives (Hvitved, 2019).

Research involving animals sparks debate about animal welfare and their rights. Such debates are focused on the justification of the research or lack thereof. Research approaches that involve reduction, refinement, and replacement justify the research but also try to present both the benefits and harms that have arisen. Such research is still controversial because when it comes to inflicting pain and suffering on animals, society reacts regardless of compliance with regulatory norms. Arguments for conducting such research often contribute to veterinary science, medicine, or natural research. Virtue ethics is grounded in

the researcher, as well as in the context of the conducted study. The researcher reflects on how to treat animals. Utilitarians strive for balanced benefits, both for humans and non-human animals, while Regan emphasizes that there are no harmful research practices when animals are used in them (Walker, 2020).

Peter Singer believes that animals have rights because they are beings capable of feeling pain, suffering, and pleasure. He argues that any form of discrimination against animals is equal to forms of aggressive behaviour in racism, chauvinism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. The role of animals throughout history has been ambiguous. Animals were considered good food, were good for work and warfare, represented kinship between humans and animals, and were good for politics and socializing. According to a philosophical-religious view, any violence against animals is prohibited according to Jain teachings. Theologian Eugen Drewermann states that the lack of Christianity lies in its focus only on human beings (Marjanić, 1997).

The traditional understanding of human beings primarily regarded them as objects, not subjects. This understanding has changed over time. Each state has its principles regarding the treatment of its citizens. Through such state arrangements, international agreements on human rights relating to the prohibition of human trafficking have been concluded. The Covenant of the League of Nations of 1920 applied to states that were defeated in World War I and came under League mandate. With the dissolution of the League and the increasing strength of the Permanent Mandates Commission, the UN Trusteeship System was formed, and by 1994, all areas under the Trusteeship System had gained independence as sovereign states. The second part of the Covenant of the League of Nations is related to human rights, and the entire task was taken over by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1941, outlined four essential components of human freedom relating to freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, and freedom from want and fear. Each state had its unique leadership, and they could not fully agree on the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but the UN Declaration became the basis of international human rights due to its legal, moral, and political significance. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to life, liberty, security, and privacy, the right to seek refuge in any country, the right to property, and the right to participate in the governance of one's own country, among many other rights (International Human Rights). Every human being is born free, dignified, endowed with reason, and possesses the freedom of movement, expression, and the right to

equality. These principles are complemented by the prohibition of subjecting human beings to degrading torture, punishment, and medical and scientific experiments without personal consent. Human beings are not allowed to be held in slavery and captivity, and if deprived of freedom, they should be treated with respect. In light of the above, the question arises as to whether these rights are applied to all living beings.

As stated in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, environmental protection is an essential component for sustainability and improving the quality of the environment, emphasizing the controlled use of environmental resources and the responsibility of each individual. It confirms the aspiration for a harmonious life for humans and the natural environment. Following these principles, does humanity, as human beings, act responsibly in protecting their environment as well as every living being within it, which is part of the overall interconnected system? In such a system, every human action results in a reaction from nature and its alteration. Accordingly, the question arises: What can humans do in this process? Can they take on the role of educators, teaching about the quality development of humans and society, the preservation of the environment, and the sustainable development of nature? Recommendations on the status of teachers highlight principles that emphasize how the education of children from an early age should be directed towards learning about the development of human beings and respecting humans, society, culture, and nature (Spajić-Vrkaš, 2001).

Veganism as salvation

The consumption of animal meat dates back to ancient history. Certain peoples consume and kill animals to survive extreme natural conditions, which is justified to some extent. However, how to contemplate when other peoples do not have to do it for survival but do so out of their personal preferences? Perhaps the answer can be found in scientifically proven research on diet types. Animal meat is not necessary for human health and longevity (Singer, 1999). The use of animals for research purposes is always a topical and politically charged issue. Non-human animals are the focus of ethical moral debate, attracting many groups of people who clash with different opinions. Abolitionists, as advocates for animal rights, believe that such practices should be abolished because they are cruel and immoral for every animal. Abolitionists emphasize animal rights and the improvement of ethics towards animals. The main conflict of all different viewpoints revolves around the feeling of pain and suffering in non-

human animals. One reason is intellectual poverty, which is evident through the objectivity of the problem, as well as the lack of respect and the existence of other possibilities. Accordingly, scepticism towards animal suffering arises, which, if it occurs, should be based on verified assumptions and statements of others. Historical foundations established by former advocates such as Plato, Aristotle, Petrarch, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and many others focused on promoting love as the foundation of philosophy. Some, like Rousseau, contemplated love between humans and non-human animals. Of course, not to the extent of anthropomorphism (Irvine, Degeling, and Kerridge, 2013). Veganism is a movement that is rapidly spreading worldwide. Veganism has been promoted and encouraged by various globally known figures from the film industry, politics, and the business world. This movement emerged as an alternative choice, opposed to intensive animal farming and all the difficulties that such farming entails. Factors that have prompted many people to opt for veganism are primarily the aforementioned suffering of animals for the benefit of humans but also the potential sustainable and personal development of individuals through a vegan diet. The promotion of veganism in the modern world is aided by the Internet and the media, through which the modernization of production is promoted to contribute to feeding the population exclusively with plant-based products. Such an option offers every individual a choice. There is an increasing moral awareness among people towards various forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and many others that unfortunately still exist. Contrary to veganism, carnism has developed as a violent ideology that conditions people to consume animals. With the emergence of carnism, a better direction was opened for veganism, as such an ideology could provide alternative assistance to all animals that carnism destroys (Castricano and Simonsen, 2016).

Emotions drive activists in the fight for animal rights. There is a wide range of emotions that drive them to action, from anger and empathy to feelings of guilt, and many others. Emotions bring together activists who initiate social movements with the aim of awakening morality in dominant ideological societies. Activists state that the application of moral shock through the placement of video materials or photographs in the media or social networks acts as a motivational stimulus and helps in raising awareness of people towards animals. Often, such moral shocks present the suffering of animals, which can be a double-edged sword because it can create disgust and repulsion in people when they see it, thus diverting attention from what is essential (Hansson and Jacobsson, 2014).

Using moral and free choice, humans decide what meat to eat and which not to. Most people have inherited the consumption of animals generationally and thus adopted the attitude that animals are meant to be eaten. However, when witnessing the torture and slaughter of animals, they are horrified by the scenes they see. Nevertheless, they consume meat on a daily basis. Similar situations occur when a person refuses to eat the meat of certain animals while consuming and approving the consumption of meat from other animals entirely. The consumption of meat is not just the private ethics of an individual but is deeply rooted among communities (Castricano and Simonsen, 2016).

Conclusion

As active members of nature, humans can enrich and preserve the environment through their actions. However, at the same time, their arrogance, thoughtlessness, and greed can lead to significant imbalances and disrupt the natural structure. When we speak of thoughtlessness, we imply human moral awareness. How morally sensitive are humans towards every living being, how much do they value it, and how much do they consider it dignified as another being that is equal to them in the natural cosmos? Each individual is part of the social community, and every voice, that speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves and fight in this world of injustice, is valuable. Hearing the reflections and compassion of the human species for all other species can only bear fruit and contribute to natural balance. It is up to each of us how we will behave and which path we will choose. Will we follow the path led by powerful corporations and industries whose sole aim is their own benefit and financial gain, or will we choose the path of a humble, ordinary person? So humble that he takes from nature only as much as nature gives back to him, as much as it rewards him for his work and care for every participant in the natural world. Viewpoints have changed throughout history, but humans do not need to adhere exclusively to fundamental understandings of humans and non-human animals. Humans must be open-minded and reflect on current facts and proven claims as conscious, intellectual, and moral beings. They must respect nature as a living complex that changes through human action. They must respect the signs that nature gives them and help nature recover. Animals are a link in such a system; if broken, they will trigger an immediate reaction of visible recovery. When we talk about animals, we think about their exploitation for human interests. Interests such as meat consumption, entertainment, and the attraction of wild animals, as well as satisfying the whims of the fashion and cosmetics industries, cause enormous

harm to nature. Ethics is a virtue that intellectual beings must know how to apply for the benefit of the Earth. It concerns not only one group of believers, one nation, one race, but all of us, every individual. Every child or every elderly person can and must learn to live an open and honest life in which they will do good for the planet. The planet as the common home of all of us.

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BIOETIČKI SENZIBILITET PREMA STATUSU ŽIVOTINJA I NJIHOVIM PRAVIMA

Sažetak

Čovjek je moralno i svjesno biće. Njegova je uloga u prirodnom kontekstu briga i očuvanje prirode s ciljem postizanja prirodne ravnoteže. Na svjetskoj razini tu ulogu za razvoj i očuvanje prirode, biljaka i životinja preuzima bioetika kao znanstvena disciplina. Etičnost čovjeka ogleda se u njegovoj brizi, osjetljivosti i senzibilnosti prema prirodi, životu, rađanju i smrti. Da bi se etičnost mogla ostvariti, svaki čovjek mora osvijestiti svoju moralnost. Moralna svijest čovjeka očituje se u različitim kontekstima života. Isto tako, moralnost se čovjeka ogleda i prema životinjama. Životinje kao bića ili kao ne-ljudske životinje zaslužuju brigu i suosjećajnost čovjeka. Način na koji se doživljavaju životinje kao bitni dionici prirodne ljestvice, ovisi o svakom pojedincu. Predstavljaju li životinje ravnopravne članove prirodne zajednice ili su životinje sredstva za zadovoljavanje svakojakih čovjekovih interesa? Promišljaju li ljudi o očuvanju zemaljske planete kada se potiče i razvija masovni uzgoj domaćih

životinja? Koliko je bitna dobrobit životinja i poštivanje zakona o zaštiti istih, može se iščitati iz čovjekovog djelovanja. Staklenički plinovi uzrokovani masovnim uzgojem životinja stavljaju na razmatranje društvenoj i akademskoj zajednici moralnu opravdanost takvih postupaka. Smatra li se konzumiranje mesa nužnom potrebom kako bi se ljudska populacija prehranila i održala ili se pak radi o čovjekovom interesu i izboru? Izbor i odabir stila i načina života u ovom užurbanom i modernom svijetu isključivo je na nama samima. Znanjem, motivacijom, upornošću, ljubavlju, brižnošću, poštovanjem i osjetljivošću prema prirodi, okolišu, biljkama i životinjama možemo ovaj svijet učiniti zdravijim i ljepšim za sve nas.

■ **Ključne riječi:** bioetika, čovjek, moralnost, životinje