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ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Animals and Human Rights

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that human rights theory faces pressure from scholarship on animals. Because grounding human rights in bare species membership seems implausible, most theories ground such rights in species neutral criteria. These criteria may be naturalistic (based on sentience or autonomy, for example) or functionalist (based on the socio-political role of rights). Standard theories of human rights have not adequately addressed that many animals appear to meet these criteria, as we show that they do across a range of arguments. However, consistency demands that if a being meets the criteria a theory stipulates for the possession of human rights, they should be recognised as possessing such rights. This leaves human rights theory with three options: it must either explain why these criteria are not met by animals after all, offer alternate criteria—or recognise many animals as bearers of ‘human’ rights.

1 | Introduction

Human rights are universal entitlements to the respect, protection and fulfilment of the fundamental conditions necessary to survive, develop and live a minimally decent life. They are generally understood both as legal rights, codified in international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and as moral rights, expressing normative standards about how their bearers ought to be treated. Traditionally, those bearers were taken to be *all* and *only* humans (Maritain 1944; Wasserstrom 1964). Contemporary theories diverge, yet a broadly human-centred status quo remains within human rights theory (HRT).¹

This status quo has come under increasing pressure from a growing body of scholarship on animals. Many have argued that restricting human rights exclusively to humans cannot be justified.² In Section 2, we explain the thrust of a particular strand of this challenge in greater detail. Subsequently, we examine how

both main approaches to grounding human rights attempt to respond to it. Section 3 argues that many animals meet the criteria proposed by *naturalistic* accounts, according to which human rights are preinstitutional and held by their bearers due to the possession of certain capacities. Section 4 then argues that many animals can also satisfy the criteria proposed by *functionalist* accounts for which human rights are post-institutional and held by their bearers due to the roles rights play in socio-political practices.³ Section 5 therefore concludes that HRT faces pressure to recognise many animals as bearers of human rights and explores some ways its architecture could change to reflect this.

2 | Species Neutrality and Human Rights

There are two main ways of justifying the standard view that human rights are held by all and only human beings. The first is to claim that human rights are grounded in the bare fact of being human.⁴ This approach is rarely defended explicitly in recent literature. The idea that membership in a biological

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category can by itself justify certain rights appears increasingly implausible. This is because the appeal to species appears arbitrary unless something morally relevant about it is identified—in much the same way that a justificatory appeal to race or sex would appear arbitrary.

Animal ethicists have therefore claimed that appeals to the bare fact of being human are ‘speciesist’ insofar as they appear to involve an unjustifiable ‘prejudice or bias’ towards the human species (Singer 1975, 26).⁵ As a result, Liao (2015, 12) writes that:

Many philosophers believe that when we assess who can be a right holder we must meet what might be called the Species Neutrality Requirement. [This requirement] says that an adequate account of right holding must provide some criterion for right holding that in principle does not exclude any species and where the criterion can be assessed through some objective, empirical method.

A second approach to defending the standard view is therefore much more popular in contemporary HRT, precisely because it satisfies the requirement to be neutral over which species are included as human rights holders. This approach grounds human rights not in bare species membership but in a further (set of) criterion, which it claims correlates with being human.⁶ For naturalistic accounts, which ground human rights in natural capacities, this might be a morally relevant property such as sentience or autonomy (defined below). For functionalist accounts, which ground human rights in the role they play in socio-political practices, it might instead be some morally relevant function that these rights serve, such as triggering other states’ intervention when violated.

However, once HRT grounds human rights in criteria that meet the species neutrality requirement, it should be committed to applying those criteria consistently—regardless of species. Put formally:

The Consistency Condition (CC): if a theory conditions the possession of human rights on specific (naturalistic or functionalist) criteria, then it ought to include all beings who meet those criteria as rights holders.

This paper draws on animal scholarship to show that many animals can satisfy the conditions that HRT regularly specifies for the possession of human rights.⁷ This leaves HRT with three options. First, theorists might try to show that animals do not meet these criteria after all, for instance, by providing evidence or arguments that overcome the claims surveyed below. Second, theorists might revise the criteria they use to ground human rights and offer criteria that satisfy the CC while in fact correlating with all and only human beings. Lastly, HRT could recognise many animals as bearers of ‘human’ rights.⁸ In what follows, we argue that this last option is the most plausible route.

3 | Naturalistic Accounts

Contemporary theories seem to offer a ‘dizzying’ number of naturalistic grounds for human rights (Nickel and Etinson 2024). Some authors ground rights in a single capacity (e.g., Griffin 2008) and others in a plurality of capacities (e.g., Gilibert 2018, 2024), whereas others still rely on intermediary concepts such as dignity (e.g., Kateb 2011). However, most naturalistic theories can be pared down to two general capacities: the capacity to have *interests* and the capacity for *autonomy* (Topf 2025).⁹ Indeed, most theories give a central role to interests, autonomy or both.¹⁰

Arguably, the natural capacity underlying the possession of interests is *sentience*: the capacity for valenced subjective experiences (Browning and Birch 2020). Sentience is taken to ground human rights because such rights protect or promote sentient beings’ interests—safeguarding their basic needs and welfare (e.g., Miller 2012; Shue 2020; Tasioulas 2010). In contrast, autonomy is the ability to guide one’s beliefs and behaviour based on reasons.¹¹ Theorists who prioritise an agent’s ability to author their own life in particular ways ground human rights in autonomy (e.g., Christiano 2015; Gewirth 1996; Griffin 2008). This section illustrates that many animals plausibly possess both sentience and autonomy in ways that are morally relevant to grounding human rights, ultimately placing pressure on naturalistic HRT to accept that many animals ought to be recognised as having ‘human’ rights.

Beings who are *sentient* display behaviours that are consistent with a ‘capacity to assign a value (advantage/good, harm/bad) to a particular stimulus’ (Lyon et al. 2021, 5). There is particularly strong evidence that mammals and birds do so (Andrews et al. 2024). For instance, studies find that many avian species, including chickens and pigeons, experience pain behaviours based on stimuli involved in welfare issues such as beak trimming and limb abnormalities (Mikoni et al. 2022). However, there is also ‘a realistic possibility of conscious experience in all vertebrates’ and ‘many invertebrates’ (Andrews et al. 2024). Many such animals, for example, change their behaviour after negative events, alter social interactions when distressed and show long-lasting avoidance learning.¹²

Beings who are *autonomous* display behaviours responsive to reasons. There is also ample evidence showing that many animals exhibit such signs of autonomy. For instance, Proctor et al. (2013) used economic games to show behaviour responsive to fairness in chimpanzees. Furthermore, Masserman et al. (1964, 585) used electric shocks to show behaviour responsive to a sensitivity to another’s distress in rhesus monkeys. Indeed, other animals also evidence a wide span of behaviours guided by reasons, including bonobos, elephants and dogs (Nussbaum 2023, 39).¹³

Some theorists nonetheless insist that such studies do not prove that animals possess sentience or autonomy, since the behaviours observed stem from mere instinctive responses (e.g., Carruthers 2000; Frankfurt 1971, 1988; Korsgaard 2018). Yet scepticism applies to other animals and humans alike in the form of the familiar ‘problem of other minds’ (Avramides 2023). It therefore seems unjustified to treat comparable behavioural evidence as sufficient for ascribing sentience or autonomy to

humans, but insufficient for ascribing it to other animals. Moreover, moral precaution speaks in favour of erring on the side of caution here, as wrongly denying these capacities may lead us to withhold essential entitlements and protections from beings to whom they are due (Birch 2024; Sebo 2018, 2025).

Nonetheless, HRT still tends to resist extending human rights to animals at least in a commensurate way. Human rights theorists might justify this in one of two ways: by focussing on variations either in the *degree* to which these grounding capacities are possessed or differences in the *kind* of way in which they are possessed.

Consider variations in degree first. It might be thought that different animals possess varying degrees of sentience or autonomy. For instance, perhaps some fish have a lower degree of sentience than humans.¹⁴ A naturalistic theory may therefore argue there is a threshold to which a capacity must be possessed in order to ground human rights. However, if we set the threshold for the possession of sentience or autonomy low enough to include all humans,¹⁵ then abiding by the CC means that many animals must also be included. To argue for this, animal ethicists have often relied on ‘marginal cases’ (Singer 1975; Regan 1983).¹⁶ These are examples, which demonstrate that some animals—such as great apes, dolphins or elephants—possess significant degrees of sentience and autonomy that are at least on a par with those possessed by some humans—such as infants and people with impaired cognitive capacities.¹⁷ An alternative approach would be to set the threshold high enough that it excludes all animals, including those in the examples listed above.¹⁸ But this seems implausible on the grounds that it would then also exclude many of the aforementioned most vulnerable humans too. Relying on variations in degree is therefore not generally regarded as a plausible way to avoid including animals as human rights holders.¹⁹

Next consider differences in kind. First, some might argue that animals have a different kind of sentience from humans—where only the latter grounds human rights. But such arguments appear to lack an empirical basis: evolutionary biology and comparative ethology support a continuity in the cognitive and neurological substrates of sentience, not sharp qualitative breaks.²⁰ Moreover, although the interests of animals and humans may differ in outward expression, they often reflect the same underlying generic interest. For instance, an elephant may have an interest in ample roaming territory, whereas a human may have an interest in insulated shelter, yet both express an interest in secure habitation. Of course, differences in interests seem relevant to the ultimate list of rights different beings ought to be recognised as possessing, perhaps specific to their species (Fasel 2024). However, we already acknowledge this among humans, too, through more specific human rights conventions, such as the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child or the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Such specifications may also be extended to different animals (e.g., we might develop a convention on the rights of migratory birds). However, this seems irrelevant to whether beings possess human rights in the first place.

Second, some authors argue that although many animals possess more basic forms of autonomy (e.g., practical, perceptual or

intentional guidance by reasons), only humans possess more complex forms (e.g., propositional deliberation).²¹ Human rights theorists have claimed that it is only the latter kind that grounds human rights (e.g., Gewirth 1996; Griffin 2008). However, leaving the empirical validity of this distinction to one side, such arguments that only complex forms of autonomy can ground human rights appear implausible: theorists claim that autonomy grounds human rights because it involves a capacity to be guided by reasons, and beings can be guided by reasons whether those are basic or complex. Purported differences in kinds of autonomy therefore seem irrelevant to whether one’s capacity to be guided by reasons could ground the possession of rights. This follows even if the kind of autonomy can plausibly affect the way rights are practically administered. For instance, human rights that involve the ability to consent, waive or transfer one’s entitlements might require complex forms of autonomy involving linguistic, conceptual or higher-order reasoning. Where animals are incapable of these, they may require proxies or representatives to act on their behalf—as in the case of infants, people with severe cognitive disabilities or people with dementia (Cochrane 2018; Kurki and Siemieniec 2025; Rutledge-Prior 2025). Therefore, differences in the kind of autonomy also do not seem to justify denying that animals meet the conditions for the possession of human rights.

Many animals therefore appear to satisfy the criteria that naturalistic HRT tends to treat as grounding human rights. The CC therefore leaves such theories with three options. First, they could try to illustrate that animals are not sentient or autonomous in the relevant sense after all. However, the above discussion indicates this is implausible. Second, they could argue that a different natural capacity grounds human rights. But this also seems doubtful, because the capacity must be morally relevant (Horta 2018; Perry 2026a). Although sentience and autonomy plausibly meet this standard, it is unclear if any other capacity could do so. That leaves the third option: naturalistic HRT should accept that many animals ought to be recognised as bearers of human rights.

4 | Functionalist Accounts

Unlike naturalistic theories, functionalist accounts frame human rights by reference to existing or emerging international political or social practices. This literature can be broken down into three main strands: minimalistic, political and conventionalist accounts. This section argues that many animals can meet the criteria each of these theories stipulate for human rights possession, ultimately placing pressure on functionalist HRT to also accept that animals ought to be recognised as having human rights.

First, on minimalistic accounts, human rights govern a state’s minimum treatment of its citizens and thereby regulate whether it counts as a minimally tolerable member of the international community. A regime which persistently violates the human rights of its citizens forfeits its standing among other states. Typical consequences of this may include withholding diplomatic recognition, exclusion from international bodies or suspension of ongoing cooperation. Rawls (1999) prominently proposes this view. For him, human rights minimally ‘specify the outer boundary of admissible domestic law’ which representatives of peoples would hypothetically agree to (Rawls 1993, 59).²²

Although minimalistic accounts do not generally recognise animals as human rights holders, species neutrality combined with the CC prompts us to ask whether they could be. Many animals are acutely vulnerable to state authority. Their basic interests are directly, continuously and substantially affected by political decisions regarding a variety of issues, such as deforestation, farming, meat consumption or conservation. It therefore seems as though a state's treatment of them can likewise be regarded as relevant to whether it is minimally just domestically and therefore tolerable internationally. Indeed, Rawls' (1999, 65–67) own list of human rights gives no internal justification for restricting these rights to humans alone, rather than including all beings whose basic interests bear on a state's tolerability within the international order.²³

A minimal theory might reply that the function of human rights is to specify how a state must treat its *citizens*, which animals are not. Yet species neutrality also pressures such theories to explore whether they could be. Citizenship might take the form of passive protection by political and legal practices, as in the case of children, people with severe cognitive disabilities or people with dementia. Animals can clearly be citizens in this sense with human representatives expressing their interests—as guardians do in comparable human cases (Cochrane 2018; Kurki and Siemieniec 2025; Rutledge-Prior 2025). In fact, many states already acknowledge responsibility for protecting important animal interests through legislation on their living, working and even slaughter conditions (Stucki 2020, 2023).²⁴ But there is also a second form of citizenship on which citizens take more active involvement in political practices, for instance, by engaging in political processes. Some have argued that animals may even be capable of participating in these practices and should therefore be extended this form of citizenship (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 2025).²⁵

Second, on political accounts, human rights also govern a state's minimum treatment of its citizens, but they do so in order to regulate how members of the international community may legitimately respond to violations of this treatment. A regime that persistently violates its citizens' human rights gives other states reasons for justified responses—where the type, gravity, etc. of the violation fixes the repertoire of legitimate responses. Typical consequences may include assistance, criticism, sanctions or other collective intervention. Beitz (2009) is a central proponent of this view: for him, human rights protect urgent interests against characteristic threats posed by states and thereby mark the limits of a state's sovereignty. They identify when one state's conduct provides other states permission to respond through assistance, criticism, sanctions or, in grave cases, collective action.²⁶

Political accounts can include animals for similar reasons to minimalist accounts, since they also begin from a state's treatment of those subject to its authority. In fact, animals appear particularly vulnerable to state power, as governments systematise severe harms to their most urgent interests, including to life, freedom and well-being. Annually, state-sanctioned industries kill hundreds of millions of animals for food, confine billions in factory farms and subject many more to invasive experimentation (Humane World for Animals 2025). So there seems to be no principled reason why persistent violations of

animals' interests could not also give other states reasons for legitimate responses—fixed by the type and severity of the violation, rather than by the species of those harmed.

Lastly, on conventionalist accounts, human rights codify a shared socio-political convention about how humans should be treated. Here, human rights articulate the main content of the convention—for example, as expressing equal authority, rank or standing. But they also generate and sustain the relevant convention through their continued use in law, institutions and public discourse. In this way, the authority of human rights comes from the fact that we treat them as constituting how humans should be treated. Accordingly, a regime that persistently violates such rights fails to comply with the relevant convention. Killmister (2020, 2023, 2026) has developed a prominent recent version of this view.²⁷ For her, human rights involve normative expectations that apply to those recognised as members of the human social category. For instance, she argues that when activists or politicians defend refugees' rights to asylum they participate in the shared socio-political convention of recognising these individuals as belonging to the human social category (Killmister 2023).

On the face of it, it might appear difficult to include animals in such accounts. The conventions on which human rights are based have historically, socially and politically been constructed to centre on humans (Killmister 2020, chap. 5).²⁸ Yet notice that conventionalist accounts cannot simply take human rights to codify prevailing, even dominant, conventions. If they did, they would not be able to take all humans to possess them regardless of age, race, class or sex, because rights were once exclusively possessed by adult, white, property-owning men. Indeed, the systematic contemporary affront on the human rights of minority groups would then actually serve as evidence against their rights, according to these theories, rather than as violations of them. In many places the rights of women and people of colour, for instance, are not adequately respected. Conventionalist accounts must therefore be necessarily selective among which conventions they take to codify human rights based on how they believe humans *should* be treated, rather than how they *have* historically been treated or actually *are* being treated.

This means that conventionalist accounts must remain responsive to emerging conventions about how beings should be treated. As before, species neutrality combined with the CC means that the relevant conventions need not regard only humans.²⁹ Just as human rights conventions expanded to include women and people of colour in response to the women's and civil rights movements, they can do so again for animals. Indeed, a growing convention of extending such rights to animals is already evident across at least three domains. First, social movements support protective animal legislation, including through organisations such as PETA, Greenpeace and animal shelters like the RSPCA. Second, NGOs push for quasi-institutional frameworks that mirror human rights, such as the 1977 Universal Declaration of Animal Rights³⁰ and the Nonhuman Rights Project's *habeas corpus* challenges on behalf of elephants and chimpanzees (Andrews et al. 2018; Kurki 2021; Wise 2019). Finally, legal systems are increasingly incorporating notions that mirror human rights practice for animals, such as the Swiss constitutional recognition of 'animal dignity' (Swiss Confederation 2008).

Many animals can therefore satisfy the criteria for the possession of human rights across all three functionalist accounts. To return to Liao's (2015, 12) species neutrality requirement, since these theories do not ground human rights in bare species membership, but in species neutral criteria, 'there does not seem to be an a priori way of knowing who the right holders are'. This likewise leaves functionalist HRT with three options. First, theorists might show that animals cannot hold such roles in international political or social practice after all. The above arguments show that this appears doubtful. Second, they might construct arguments around altogether different socio-political functions. But it is difficult to see how these could justifiably exclude animals while satisfying the CC. That once more leaves the third option: functionalist HRT should accept that many animals ought to be recognised as having human rights.

5 | Conclusion

This article has argued that human rights theory faces pressure from contemporary scholarship on animals. Naturalistic accounts often rely on grounding capacities that many animals plausibly possess, while functionalist accounts specify roles that many animals can plausibly occupy. Standard views that all and only humans possess human rights therefore appear to withhold recognition from beings whom, on their own criteria, they ought to be committed to recognising as right holders. Some theorists may now hedge that human rights are predominately held by humans, but this too is not enough, as it obscures the vast number of animals who meet the relevant criteria and thus merit explicit recognition as human rights holders. Moreover, even remaining silent on the status of animals stands in need of justification. This is because it leaves an interpretive vacuum which is not innocent: given the reality that animals are generally not treated as human rights holders, anything other than their explicit inclusion functionally maintains their exclusion.

This pressure to include animals in HRT invites a series of theoretical and practical questions for future research. Two are especially worth ending with. One question is whether we should pursue two distinct sets of rights—human rights and animal rights—or one unified theory of rights for both humans and animals.³¹ Three considerations make the latter appear more plausible. First, the arguments above suggest that the possession of human rights simply does not track a human-animal boundary: many animals can meet the criteria for possessing human rights too. Second, our tendency to divide the world into in- and out-groups according to a human-animal species boundary (Jaquet 2022, Topf 2025) means that separating human and animal rights risks further distorting our recognition of animals as being like us in important ways. A unified theory would instead support the idea that humans and animals ultimately belong to a single in-group, thereby reinforcing and promoting justice for both humans and animals (Perry 2026b, 73–74). Third, human rights practice already has considerable socio-political, legal, economic and institutional resources. Rebuilding that architecture for a separate category of animal rights would therefore not merely be inefficient, but it would also likely disadvantage animals.

Provided we pursue a unified theory, a second question is whether we should continue to call these 'human' rights

(Cavalieri 2002, 139). The alternative would be to adopt a different label, such as 'sentient' rights (Cochrane 2013) or 'one' rights (Stucki 2023). Depending on the criteria for their possession, these rights may be held by anything from hundreds of thousands of great apes to trillions of different animals. Calling them human rights would therefore be conceptually misleading: it casts animals as anomalous add-ons, rather than as unambiguous rights holders. Yet the label would also appear unjustified if humans happened to outnumber animals as rights holders, since rights are not normally named after the group that holds them in greater numbers. Indeed, we often refer to rights using the name of the sub-group of rights holders whose inclusion most needs emphasising—as in the case of women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights or BIPOC rights. While reaffirming the rights of humans remains urgent, it is animals who are overwhelmingly vulnerable to many of the very harms that human rights are designed to remedy. In this respect, retaining the term human rights would risk functioning more like the language of men's rights, heterosexual rights or white rights. 'Human' rights can apply to humans and animals alike just as well under another name.

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Ethics Statement

The authors have nothing to report.

Consent

The authors have nothing to report.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

Endnotes

¹ For a comprehensive discussion, see Nickel (2007) and Stucki (2023).

² See Dombrowski (1997), Regan (1983) and Singer (1975). For specific critiques of human rights see Cochrane (2013, 2026), Cavalieri (2002), Kymlicka (2018), Perry (2026a), Stucki (2023) and Topf (2025).

³ We put hybrid accounts (e.g., Liao and Etinson 2012; Sangiovanni 2018) to one side.

⁴ This is often referred to as 'direct' or 'unqualified' speciesism (Jaquet 2024, 309; Rachels 1990, 183).

- ⁵ As well as footnote 2, see also Albersmeier (2021), Horta and Albersmeier (2020), and Jaquet (2022).
- ⁶ This is often referred to as 'indirect' or 'qualified' speciesism (Jaquet 2024, 309; Rachels 1990, 184).
- ⁷ We put the possibility of plants and AI to one side here.
- ⁸ On naturalistic accounts, beings are usually said to 'have' human rights. On functionalist accounts, it is in contrast said that beings 'ought to have' human rights. Since this distinction is not central to our argument, we use the broader formulation that animals 'ought to be recognised as having human rights' to encompass both.
- ⁹ Flourishing is sometimes regarded as a third main contender for the grounds of human rights (see Gould 2004; Nussbaum 2023; Talbott 2010). However, Topf (2025) argues that it is not a separate rights-grounding capacity, but a species-specific variation of sentience. We therefore put flourishing aside here.
- ¹⁰ This is revealed by the function that rights hold in the relevant theory. Will theories ultimately argue that rights function to safeguard the right holder's autonomy (e.g., Hart 2012; Steiner 1994; Wellman 1985). In contrast, interest theories argue that rights function to safeguard the right holder's interests (e.g., Feinberg 1966; Kramer 2024; Raz 1986).
- ¹¹ Although we stick to the term autonomy here, this capacity is also referred to as 'agency' (e.g., Liao 2015), 'rationality' (e.g., Gewirth 1996) and 'personhood' (e.g., Griffin 2008), among other things.
- ¹² For further examples, see Browning and Birch (2020), Birch (2024) and Broom (2016).
- ¹³ For further examples and discussion, see the edited collection by Andrews and Beck (2017).
- ¹⁴ Lee (2023), for example, argues that there can be degrees of consciousness.
- ¹⁵ See for example Miller (2012), Shue (2020) and Tasioulas (2010).
- ¹⁶ For a comprehensive discussion see Dombrowski (1997). See also McMahan (2002).
- ¹⁷ This style of argument faces criticism by disability scholars (e.g., Kittay 2005).
- ¹⁸ See for example Gewirth (1996) and Griffin (2008).
- ¹⁹ Indeed, the level at which the threshold is set appears morally arbitrary for determining the mere possession of rights, even if it may be relevant to what the resulting right demands (Ebert 2020; Floris and Timmer 2025). See also Kagan (2019).
- ²⁰ The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness (2012) states that 'the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Non-human animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates.' See also Lee (2024).
- ²¹ For this distinction see, for example, Healey and Pepper (2021), Sebo (2018) and Wilcox (2020).
- ²² See also Cohen (2004) and Reidy (2010).
- ²³ Theorists have argued that animals can be included in the contractualist reasoning that informs Rawls work (Bernstein 1997; Rowlands 1997) and in a broader Rawlsian theory of justice (Garner 2013).
- ²⁴ Stucki (2023) calls these protections 'simple' rights and argues that they should be formalised as more robust 'fundamental' rights.
- ²⁵ Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011, 2025) use the language of 'political agency' here.
- ²⁶ See also, for example, Buchanan (2007), Nickel (2007), Raz (2010) and Shue (2020).
- ²⁷ See also, for example, Waldron (2012) and Phillips (2021).
- ²⁸ Conventionalist views therefore face charges of discriminating on the basis of species (Kymlicka 2018; Perry 2026a; Rossello 2017; Topf 2025).
- ²⁹ Cochrane (2026) and Kymlicka (2018) argue that conventionalist human rights practice can be highly speciesist.
- ³⁰ Although never made legally binding, this declaration continues to be influential on the debate (Azevedo et al. 2025).
- ³¹ For proponents of unified theories, see: Cavalieri (2002, chap. 6), Cochrane (2013, 2026), Fasel (2024), Kymlicka (2018), Perry (2026b), Stucki (2023) and Topf (2025).

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