

PL 385: Studies in Ethics

Applying Ethical Theories to the Welfare of Animals: Hunting Whales

We have read articles in our textbook on environmental ethics and we have discussed these ethical perspectives on the environment in class. Any of these could be applied to making a decision about whether or not to expand the hunting of whales, which has been limited worldwide for several decades under an agreement among the member nations of the International Whaling Commission. For a number of years, the Japanese have led a small but growing group of nations in urging that the ban on whale hunting be lifted. Under a rule that permits whale hunting for scientific research, the Japanese (and several other nations) have continued to hunt whales; they also prize whale meat as a delicacy, and value whale hunting as a cultural tradition. A January 2010 news article from the Christian Science Monitor on the current state of Japan's whaling is attached to this assessment. A description of the work and role of the International Whaling Commission in regulating whaling can be found at: <http://www.iwcoffice.org/commission/iwcmain.htm>. You can also click on the link to "Meetings" on the IWC website to get an update on the commission's latest rulings on whaling. The Sea Shepherd Society is one of many environmental groups that oppose expanding Japanese whaling, and, along with Greenpeace, actively interferes with Japanese whaling vessels. You can find information about their latest activities on their website at <http://www.seashepherd.org/>. A history of Japanese whaling and an argument for lifting the whaling ban can be found on the website of a Japanese government agency, the Institute of Cetacean Research, at <http://www.icrwhale.org/japan-history.htm>. Finally, a letter explaining Japanese attitudes toward eating whale meat can be found at the website of the Japan Whaling Association at http://www.whaling.jp/english/isana/no30_02.html.

In a 2-3 page essay, give your view of whether or not the International Whaling Commission should expand the right of the Japanese to hunt whales. Choose at least two of the environmental ethics perspectives we have been discussing and show how each of those theories could be applied to arrive at your own position (you may show how your position agrees or disagrees with each ethical view you select). Explain also what implications the position you have taken on hunting whales has for your current thinking about and behavior toward animals.

Criteria

- The student takes a position for or against the hunting of whales by the Japanese
- The student supports her position on the hunting of whales by applying in detail at least two of the ethical theories we have studied in the course
- The student refers to specific aspects of the case of Japanese whale hunting in coming to a decision about the ethics of whale hunting
- The student explains the implications of her position on whale hunting for her thinking about and behavior toward animals
- The student organizes her ideas logically in a 2-3 page essay that meets at least L4 writing criteria