

Korsgaard's Duties towards Animals

Two Difficulties¹

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ABSTRACT

*Building on her previous work (2004, 2012, 2013), Christine Korsgaard's recent book *Fellow Creatures* (2018) has provided the most highly developed Kantian account of duties towards animals. I raise two issues with the results of this account. First, the duties that Korsgaard accounts for are duties "towards" animals in name only. Since Korsgaard does not reject the Kantian conception in which direct duties towards others require mutual moral constraint, what she calls duties "towards" animals are merely Kantian duties regarding animals, verbally repackaged. Hence, Korsgaard's account is best understood as an expansion (albeit a substantial one) of Kant's own view of an indirect duty regarding animals. Second, the expansion does not take us quite as far as Korsgaard hopes. She aims for a conception in which our duties towards animals and humans are equally important, but her argument does not support this conclusion. I point out the potential for a more radical revision of Kant's anthropocentrism that rejects his underlying assumption that duties towards others are based on mutual constraint.*

Keywords: anthropocentrism; autonomy; deontology; duties to animals; Kant; Kantianism; Korsgaard; moral status; non-consequentialism; obligation.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to a longstanding philosophical tradition, our duties concerning the treatment of animals are not directed towards animals themselves but

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towards another entity (God, other human beings, ourselves). This view was held by Thomas Aquinas, Maimonides, Clement of Alexandria, the Stoics, and arguably already by Pythagoras (Sorabji 1993, 129, 173). Kant, who ties moral consideration to autonomy, is the most historically influential proponent of this tradition in the last half millennium. His views on animals, unlike those of his predecessors, continue to enjoy prominent support in ethics (see section 2 below).

Christine Korsgaard challenges Kant's denial of duties towards animals but means to endorse many of his underlying philosophical views. In *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to the Other Animals* (Korsgaard 2018), she argues for a broadly Kantian conception in which we have duties towards animals that are just as important as our duties to human beings. The book builds on Korsgaard's influential work in both Kantian ethics (e.g., Korsgaard 1986, 1996, 2009) and animal ethics (e.g., Korsgaard 2004, 2012, 2013). Its central argument revolves around the claim that rational agency commits us to morally considering all creatures for whom things can be good or bad.

If Korsgaard's argument succeeds, it shows that tying morality to autonomy does not necessarily exclude animals from moral consideration. Thus, one of the most influential lines of reasoning against the moral standing of animals from the last centuries rests on a mistake. If Korsgaard's argument fails, the way in which it fails can still point us in the direction of a successful argument. So it is no surprise that Korsgaard's book has garnered great interest. Previous responses have focused on various steps of her argument (Howe 2019; Birch 2020; Godfrey-Smith 2021). By contrast, I want to consider the *results* of the argument, provided we go along with it. Does the argument get us where Korsgaard wants to take us? Not quite, I think. I am going to argue for two critical claims.

First, the duties that Korsgaard accounts for are duties "towards" animals in name only. Since Korsgaard does not revise the Kantian conception in which direct duties towards others require mutual moral constraint, what she chooses to call duties "towards" animals are merely Kantian duties *regarding* animals, verbally repackaged. Hence, Korsgaard does not truly overcome Kant's denial of moral status to animals.

Second, Korsgaard's argument does not plausibly show that duties regarding animals are as important as our duties towards human beings. Her differential account of moral relations to humans versus moral relations to animals suggests that duties regarding animals have less weight.

Therefore, even if we go along with Korsgaard's argument, the results are not what she aims for. The root of the problem is that Korsgaard

remains committed to Kant's view that interpersonal duties derive their bindingness from a moral law that is shared between the person who has the duty and the person towards whom the duty is directed. Only an argument that departs from Kant on this more fundamental issue can account for duties that are *directed towards* animals in the same way our duties to human beings are directed towards them. More Kantian animal ethicists should pursue this line in the future.

2. DEALING WITH KANT'S ANTHROPOCENTRISM: FOUR BASIC STRATEGIES

To see how Korsgaard departs from Kant and other Kantians, one should first consider Kant's own views on the treatment of animals. Kant denied that we have any duties towards animals on the grounds that interpersonal duties require mutual constraint or necessitation under the moral law: "As far as reason alone can judge, a human being has duties only to human beings (himself and others), since his duty to any subject is moral constraint by that subject's will" (MS 6:442.8-11). In other words, if X has a duty towards Y, this duty is made binding by the authority of both the agent X and the subject Y as legislators of the moral law. The moral law thus functions as a shared normative basis whose force is acknowledged by both the moral agent and the moral subject. Without this shared normative basis, there cannot be duties towards others – call this the *shared-basis view*. Since animals do not share the moral law, there can be no duties towards them according to the shared-basis view².

However, Kant points out that we do have duties *regarding* animals – duties that affect how we should treat them (MS 6:443.10-25). These are duties that protect animals in virtue of the end or action they prescribe (their "content"). In particular, we have the duty to cultivate our natural capacities for sympathy and gratitude. So we have duties to treat animals with sympathy and gratitude, even if these duties are directed towards oneself and not towards animals. Kant's view is thus a paradigmatic example of what animal ethicists call an *indirect-duty view* (see Regan 2004, 174).

² Some argue that certain animals are autonomous and count as Kantian persons (Balluch 2016; Rocha 2016; Judd and Rocha 2017). But the kind of autonomy dogs and pigs plausibly have is not the kind that matters in Kant's ethics, namely, the capacity to act on a self-imposed moral law. What is more, arguing that animals are autonomous implies that animals have moral duties, not just moral claims.

The significance of Korsgaard's account can best be seen against the backdrop of an ongoing debate. Among animal ethicists, there is a virtual consensus that Kant's indirect-duty view is unacceptable (see Broadie and Pybus 1974; Pybus and Broadie 1978; Hoff 1983; Moyer 2001; Skidmore 2001; Regan 2004; Wolf 2012; Camenzind 2021). As a result, Kantianism is far less present in animal ethics than in other areas of ethics.

In the Kantian literature, meanwhile, it is still contested whether Kant's indirect-duty view needs to be revised. One camp, which we might call the radical conservatives, endorses Kant's view as is (see Hayward 1994; Baranzke 2005; Geismann 2016; Basaglia 2018; Herman 2018). More moderate conservatives endorse Kant's denial of duties to animals but argue that duties regarding animals take us further than Kant thought (see Egonsson 1997; Denis 2000; Altman 2011, 2019). This can involve minor disagreements with Kant, say on the issue of whether the duty to cultivate sympathy implies a duty of vegetarianism, which Kant denies (MS 6:443.16-19), but which Egonsson (1997) and Denis (2000) affirm.

By contrast, a progressive camp in the literature argues that we should revise Kant's denial of duties towards animals. Within this camp, there are two strategies. A moderate approach relies on adding duties towards animals as a separate class of duties, distinct in their normative grounds from our duties to human beings (Wood 1998; Timmermann 2005; Garthoff 2011; Cholbi 2014). This is the strategy Korsgaard means to employ, as I will argue in section 3. If it works, the main advantage of this strategy is that it does not require revisions to Kant's views on duties towards human beings. By contrast, a radically progressive strategy amends Kant's conception of duties towards others in general, so that it can account for duties towards animals. If successful, the advantage of this strategy is that it makes it easier to account for duties to humans and animals in the same way.

None of these strategies should be dismissed out of hand. They represent different ways of ensuring an intuitively adequate Kantian account of the ethical treatment of animals³. But the different strategies face specific challenges:

³ Radical conservatives could argue that Kantian theory is above intuitions, but the literature does not make this move. It would put Kantian theory at odds with ordinary moral phenomenology and with mainstream ethical methodology. Only deeply committed Kantians would go along with the argument. That is why all radical conservatives mentioned in section 2 try to show that Kant's view is more benign to animals than it sounds.

1. The main challenge for any conservative strategy is to show that animals receive intuitively adequate protection from duties regarding animals. They therefore must demonstrate that it makes no significant difference whether we think of these duties as duties towards animals or merely as duties regarding animals. The worry is that duties regarding animals fail to protect many animals (inadequate scope) and that these duties are comparatively unimportant (inadequate weight).
2. A moderately progressive strategy needs to show that the newly added type of duty is truly directed *towards* animals, despite arising from a different normative ground than our duties towards human beings. The worry is that such duties are really just another class of duties regarding animals. So moderately progressive views must demonstrate that they do not collapse into moderately conservative views. If they do, the challenge is again one of scope and weight.
3. Radically progressive views must show that their fundamental amendments to Kant's system do not sacrifice too much of what makes it worthwhile. This would be the case if Kantianism were rendered incoherent, or if it were turned into an odd variant of a typically more animal-friendly approach to ethics like utilitarianism. After all, it is trivial that Kant could have been more animal friendly if he had been Peter Singer. The interesting question is whether Kantianism can yield more animal-friendly results while remaining recognizably Kantian.

3. KORSGAARD ON ANIMALS AND MUTUAL CONSTRAINT

With her approach to animal ethics, Korsgaard aims to belong to the progressive camp. She repeatedly states that Kant was wrong to deny the existence of duties towards animals (Korsgaard 2018, 74, 96, 141). Her goal is not to defend Kant's indirect-duty view but to move beyond it.

But Korsgaard does not object to Kant's view that interpersonal moral obligations require mutual constraint under the moral law or that animals cannot participate in such constraint (MS 6:442.8-11). She emphasizes that in order for one person to make a claim on another, both of them must share a normative basis:

Suppose I claim something from you on the grounds that you are French and laws of France demand that you do this, but I am not French myself. Have I succeeded in giving you a reason? Only if there is some further law whose authority we do both grant, such as "everyone should obey the laws of his or her country". (Korsgaard 2018, 124)

Following her commitment to Kant's shared-basis view, Korsgaard's reasoning in favour of duties towards animals can be summarized as follows (Korsgaard 2018, 138-145). Our duties respond to the legitimate claims of others. What matters, therefore, is that we have a reason to acknowledge animals as holders of legitimate claims. We have this reason because animals share with humans the property that makes humans claim holders.

To understand the argument, consider first what makes humans holders of legitimate claims. Korsgaard argues that rational beings must endorse their own ends as absolutely good (where "absolutely good" means "giving practical reasons to everyone") (Korsgaard 2018, 138). Say that I set the goal of having a cup of coffee. I treat this goal as providing me with practical reasons to leave the house and visit the coffee shop. I also treat my goal as providing everyone else with practical reasons, including reasons not to interfere with my pursuit – for instance, people should not needlessly block my way (Korsgaard 2018, 139).

However, we treat our ends as absolutely good *not* due to some quasi-mystical insight into what is intrinsically morally valuable – such insight is impossible according to Kant (Korsgaard 2018, 140). Rather, we treat our ends as absolutely good simply because they are *ours* and achieving them is *good for us*:

We "represent" ourselves as ends in ourselves by taking what is good for us to be good absolutely, by choosing our own good, that is, what is good for us, as an end of action. It is as if whenever you make a choice, you said, "I take the things that are important to me to be important, *period*, important absolutely, because I take *myself* to be important". (Korsgaard 2018, 139)

We therefore take ourselves to have the capacity to confer absolute goodness on ends such that they generate reasons for others. To have this capacity is what it means to be an "end in itself" in Korsgaard's vocabulary.

When it comes to others, Korsgaard sees several reasons why we should acknowledge them as holders of legitimate claims on us. First, rational others *make* claims on us. This is an appeal to a shared normative basis: "When I make a moral claim on you, I appeal to a purported moral law which says that you have an obligation to treat me in the way that I demand" (Korsgaard 2018, 123).

Second, we can only make *legitimate* claims by appealing to laws that are universalizable in the sense that we could will that everyone act on them (Korsgaard 2018, 125). These laws must be acceptable for any rational being. So if we assign ourselves the status of a legitimate claim holder, we must afford the same status to all rational others.

Third, rational others make the same commitment to their end-in-itselfhood that we make, with the same justification (Korsgaard 2018, 140). So we should acknowledge rational others as ends in themselves and therefore as holders of legitimate claims.

These considerations do nothing for animals, who are not rational in the relevant sense. But a fourth consideration initiates Korsgaard's argument: Other beings share the quality to which we implicitly tie our end-in-itselfhood. That quality is being a creature for whom things can be good or bad. Korsgaard puts the point as follows:

[...] consider my own *original* decision to set a value on some ordinary end of inclination, to treat something that is good-for me as if it were good absolutely. That decision is not an act of respect for my own autonomy. After all, I cannot respect my own choices or do what is necessary to carry them out until *after* I have made them. [...] So I am deciding to treat my ends as good absolutely, simply because I am a creature with a final good. From there all we have to do is generalize: that principle requires that we should take the ends of beings who have a final good to be absolutely valuable. (Korsgaard 2018, 143-144)

I take Korsgaard to be saying the following. We treat our ends as absolutely good (as giving practical reasons to everyone). We put this value on our ends because attaining them is good for us, not because we have rationally chosen them. Therefore, while rational agency is what commits us to viewing ourselves as ends in themselves, we view ourselves in this way *qua* creatures for whom things can be good or bad, not *qua* rational agents. For the sake of consistency, we must then acknowledge all other creatures for whom things can be good or bad as ends in themselves. So we should acknowledge that what is good for them generates practical reasons for everyone. This gives them claims on us, and it gives us duties towards them.

In Korsgaard's view, "our moral relations to the other animals have a different basis and a different shape than our moral relations to other people" (Korsgaard 2018, 148). The difference lies in what makes particular duties binding. Our duties to rational human beings are binding because they can make legitimate claims on us by appealing to a shared moral law. Our duties towards animals are binding because we have a commitment to the end-in-itselfhood of ourselves *qua* animals, which should lead us to regard animals as creatures with legitimate claims on us too. In the landscape of strategic approaches to Kantian animal ethics, this places Korsgaard firmly in the moderately progressive camp, which adds duties towards animals to a Kantian framework without revising Kant's views about duties to other human beings. The question

is whether Korsgaard can deliver the results a moderately progressive approach needs to deliver, namely, duties towards animals that do not collapse back into mere duties *regarding* animals.

4. DUTIES TOWARDS ANIMALS IN WHAT SENSE?

Moderately progressive views in Kantian animal ethics face the challenge of explaining how duties towards animals are directed *towards* them, even though they rest on a different normative ground than duties towards human beings. The worry is that such an account, even if its arguments are valid, only produces another class of duties regarding animals. It thus collapses back into a moderately conservative view, which argues that indirect duties take us further than Kant thought. Here, Korsgaard's view runs into trouble.

When it comes to spelling out the sense in which our duties towards animals are directed *towards* them, Korsgaard immediately draws a distinction:

Laws are by their very nature universal, according to Kant, and a universal law can extend its protection to someone who did not participate, and could not have participated, in its legislation. So there are actually two senses in which you can "owe a duty to someone": you can owe a duty to someone in the sense that he is the recognized authority who made the law for you, or you can owe a duty to someone in the sense that the law by its content gives him a right, which enables him to make a claim on you. (Korsgaard 2018, 125)

We have duties towards human beings *both* in the sense that they are an authority that makes our duties binding *and* in the sense that they are protected by the content of our duties (Korsgaard 2018, 125). We have duties towards animals only in the latter sense. They are protected by our duties but have no part in the authority that makes them binding.

But duties that protect animals in virtue of their content (i.e., the end or action they prescribe), without responding to any authority on the part of animals, are simply what Kant (and Kantian conservatives) would call duties regarding animals (see section 2). The very purpose of distinguishing between *towards* and *regarding* is to set apart the duties we have directly to others from those that merely pertain to their treatment as a matter of content. In Kant's terminology, Korsgaard's argument therefore does not so much add duties towards animals but merely another subclass of duties regarding animals (namely, duties to regard the good of animals as providing us with practical reasons). What is more, the only

law-giving authority involved in Korsgaard's duties is the agent. So it appears that her "obligations to the other animals" are just what Kant would have called duties *towards oneself regarding animals*.

One could defend Korsgaard by saying that on her account, animals count as ends in themselves, which is a fundamental step beyond Kant. But just as there are two different senses of owing a duty to someone, for Korsgaard "there are two slightly different senses of 'end in itself'" (Korsgaard 2018, 141):

I must regard you as an end in itself in the active sense if I regard you as capable of legislating for me, and so as capable of placing me under an obligation both to respect your choices, and to limit my own choices to things compatible with your value as an end in itself. [...] I must regard you as an end in itself in the passive sense if I am obligated to treat your ends, or at least the things that are good-for you, as good absolutely. (Korsgaard 2018, 141)

Again, the difference between Korsgaard and Kant is semantic. What Korsgaard chooses to call an "end in itself in the passive sense" is what Kant might have considered a special class of things or means (see MS 6:223.32-34; Anth 8:127.08), namely, things whose treatment is restricted by certain duties we have towards ourselves or rational others. Kant and Kantian conservatives already view animals as such a special class of things. Animals can experience joy and suffering and are thus objects of sympathy, and they appear to render us services and are thus objects of gratitude. Our duties of cultivation therefore pertain to how we should treat animals. By calling animals "ends in themselves in the passive sense", Korsgaard does not fundamentally go beyond Kantian conservatism but repackages it in new vocabulary.

Finally, one could argue that Korsgaard assigns *claims* to animals, whereas Kant and Kantian conservatives do not. Her idea is that animals do not merely happen to be covered as objects by the laws we make but that they are persons – *sources* of legitimate normative claims – under these laws (Korsgaard 2004, 95, 118; Korsgaard 2018, 125-126). To put it another way, animals "obligate" us (which Korsgaard uses as a synonym for "having claims"; Korsgaard 2018, 126). Is this not a step beyond Kant's anthropocentrism?

The question is in what sense animals already "have claims" in Kant's (or a Kantian conservative's) view and whether Korsgaard goes beyond that view. It must be said that Kant himself did not deal in the currency of "moral claims", focusing instead on duties. We can think of moral claims simply as the moral subject's correlate of the moral agent's duty. Since agents can only have duties towards each other in Kant's view if they

share the moral law, animals cannot “have claims” in this sense. But Kant could agree that animals “have claims” in a more deflationary sense, in the sense of correlates to the duties regarding them. Using the vocabulary in this specific, admittedly artificial way, Kant could affirm that animals “have a claim” to being treated with sympathy and gratitude.

Kant could also affirm that animals are the “sources” of these claims in a deflationary sense. Of course, they cannot be the source of the *bindingness* of our duties. But they do determine some of the *content* of our duties by means of their behaviour. In Kant’s view, animals’ expressions of joy and suffering give rise to duties to react in a certain way, for the sake of cultivation. For example, we must respond to a cat’s hiss by indulging in our sympathetic feeling for her anxiety and by taking this feeling as a reason to help. So by hissing, the cat has unwittingly participated in specifying what we should do. In this sense, animals are sources of legitimate normative claims: by means of their behaviour, they determine a part of the content of our duties regarding them. In this restricted sense, we could also say that they “obligate” us, in the sense of unwittingly reminding us of our duties.

To be sure, there is a world of difference between this sense in which animals could be said to have claims according to Kant’s view (being able to *determine part of the content* of human beings’ duties *regarding* them) and the sense in which human beings have claims towards each other (*making duties binding* for each other, giving rise to duties *towards* each other). Frankly, it is confusing to call both by the same name. But this appears to be Korsgaard’s way of using the vocabulary:

[...] we obligate each other by making claims on each other that are reasonable because in making them we allow that others may reasonably make similar claims on us. The other animals obligate us by reminding us of what we as individuals have in common with them – that we are creatures for whom things can be good or bad, and that like them, although in our own special way, we each take our own good to be good absolutely when we engage in practical activity. (Korsgaard 2018, 147)

Animals are “sources of claims” and “obligate us” in Korsgaard’s view only in a deflationary sense that Kant could agree with: they unwittingly remind us of duties we have in virtue of our own moral authority, not theirs. Once again, the difference between Korsgaard and Kant is semantic.

We can see that Korsgaard’s view does not meet the challenge for moderately progressive views in Kantian animal ethics: to show that the added type of duties is truly directed *towards* animals, despite arising from another normative ground than duties towards human beings arise from. Under the surface, Korsgaard’s approach is more conservative than

she presents it. It is a version of the view that Kantian duties regarding animals take us further than Kant stated – moderate conservatism wrapped in progressive vocabulary. This is unfortunate given Korsgaard's goal of accounting for direct duties towards animals, but it can still be a defensible view on its own terms. The question is how well Korsgaard's results fare by the standards of a conservative Kantian strategy. Can she show that her duties regarding animals are adequate in scope and weight? This is where the second issue arises.

5. KORSGAARD AS A KANTIAN CONSERVATIVE

To repeat, the main challenge for conservative approaches is to show that animals are sufficiently protected by duties merely *regarding* them. This is a challenge because duties regarding someone have certain restrictions. First, there are built-in restrictions in the *scope* of individuals that are protected by these duties. If duties must always be directed towards human beings, duties regarding animals can only arise in virtue of some human-animal relation. This relation therefore determines which animals are covered by the content of human duties or normative commitments. We can see such a restriction in Kant's own view that indirect moral consideration is reserved for animals who gain our sympathy and gratitude. All animals we do not perceive (even if we contribute to grave harm to them) are therefore not protected by our duties of cultivation. Kant's view thus has *prima facie* an intuitively objectionable blind spot that Kantian conservatives must work around.

Second, there can be restrictions in the strength or weight of duties regarding someone, depending on the type of duty. Consider again Kant's view as an example. The point of duties of cultivation is to better enable us to observe our duties towards other human beings (MS 6:443.13-16), which is easier to do if we have intact capacities for sympathy and gratitude. But a duty whose purpose is to better enable us to observe our duties should clearly not get in the way of the actual observance of the duties that it should enable. For example, we should not deny a person in need the use of a piece of land on the grounds that its vegetation strikes us as sublime and we want to use it to cultivate our capacity for aesthetic appreciation. Kant does ask us to cultivate aesthetic appreciation, but the point of this duty is to help us value other rational beings in a disinterested way (MS 6:443.2-9). To violate someone's claims in the name of training one's capacity to value that person disinterestedly would be completely wrong-headed.

At best, Kant's duties of cultivation demand that we destroy the sublime for the benefit of other people with appropriate *pro tanto* regret, steering clear of developing a lust for destruction. Similarly, our duty to cultivate sympathy and gratitude is obviously less important than our duties towards other human beings⁴. This duty can demand that we harm animals for the sake of other human beings with appropriate *pro tanto* regret but not that we frustrate even trivial claims of human beings for the sake of animals. Kant's duties regarding animals thus appear to be lightweight. Kantian conservatives must either show this interpretation to be false, or they need to add more heavyweight duties regarding animals to the list.

Korsgaard fares much better than Kant when it comes to the scope of individuals protected by our duties. She argues that animals are protected by our commitment to the end-in-itselfhood of all creatures for whom things can be good or bad. The relevant human-animal relation that places animals inside the scope of indirect moral consideration is the similarity that we are all such creatures. So Korsgaard's account of duties regarding animals is much more comprehensive in scope than Kant's.

When it comes to weight, too, Korsgaard aims for results that are much stronger than Kant's. In her view, we commit to the end-in-itselfhood of animals with the same stringency with which we commit to the end-in-itselfhood of other human beings. Korsgaard frequently attacks the idea that human beings are morally more important than animals (Korsgaard 2018, 9-15, 59-66, 69, 94-95, 169, 210). As she presents it, her view gives the same weight to the claims of animals and the claims of human beings. Correspondingly, our duties towards animals should be just as significant as our duties towards human beings.

But this conclusion cannot be reached from a conservative view quite as easily as Korsgaard makes it seem. We have already seen that, according to Korsgaard, animals only have claims in a more deflationary sense than human beings do. The claims of animals are correlates of human duties regarding them (in the sense that they are protected by these duties and unwittingly help to determine some of their content but are not the authority that makes them binding). The claims of human

⁴ Some commentators emphasize that (perfect) duties to oneself are important in Kant's ethical system (Baranzke 2005; Camenzind 2018; Herman 2018). That is correct in general but misleading in the present context. The duty to cultivate sympathy and gratitude is comparatively unimportant in that it should usually not be prioritized over other duties, even if the class of (perfect) duties to oneself is of fundamental importance overall.

beings, by contrast, are correlates of duties towards them that their authority helps to make binding.

Once we strip away the progressive vocabulary and recognize that what Korsgaard calls the claims of animals are correlates to Kantian duties to oneself regarding animals, it appears strange to say that they have the same weight as duties to human beings. The reason why one's specific duties are binding is quite different depending on whether they are duties to human beings or duties regarding animals. An agent's duties towards other human beings are binding because of claims others make on the agent based on their authority as co-legislators of the moral law. By contrast, an agent's duties regarding animals are binding because observing them is the only way to consistently honour the agent's commitment to their own status as an end in itself qua animal. But it is hard to explain why consistency in one's commitments should be as important as observing one's duties to others.

Usually, we are not so obsessed with consistency. Imagine a person who begins a long-term project independently of other rational agents – take Korsgaard's example of growing vegetables (Korsgaard 2018, 143). The person treats this project as providing practical reasons to take various actions. But she can only consistently treat the project as providing reasons if she commits to seeing the project through to its end (say, the first harvest). We might even construe this as the person's duty towards herself: to take herself seriously enough to finish the projects she has started. If she is concerned with consistency in her own normative commitments, she should show perseverance. But if the project comes into conflict with legitimate claims other human beings make on her, the concern for consistency should be treated as less important. If consistently tending to the garden comes into conflict with helping someone in need, consistency should obviously draw the short straw. It would be a peculiar and reprehensible kind of egocentrism to treat consistency in one's own normative commitments (at least those that do not affect rational others) as equally important as one's duties towards others.

Similarly, treating one's duties regarding animals as equal in weight to our duties towards other human beings seems excessive if they are just duties to oneself to honour one's normative commitments consistently. We may commit a wrong against ourselves by not being consistent, but that wrong is lightweight compared to violating the legitimate claims others make on us. We may retain a duty to sacrifice our consistency with *pro tanto* regret, to acknowledge that something valuable had to be sacrificed, but this again puts Korsgaard in Kant's immediate vicinity. So Korsgaard's argument does not take us as far as she hopes.

6. CONCLUSION: IN FAVOUR OF A RADICALLY PROGRESSIVE STRATEGY

We have seen that Korsgaard’s approach faces two difficulties. First, she presents her approach as a moderately progressive view, but it collapses into a moderately conservative view. What Korsgaard adds to a Kantian framework are duties “towards” animals in name only; in standard Kantian vocabulary, they are duties to oneself regarding animals. Second, Korsgaard’s duties are not as heavyweight as she presents them. Since our duties regarding animals boil down to duties to oneself to honour our normative commitments consistently, it seems excessive to treat them as equally important as our duties towards human beings.

These difficulties are inherent to moderately progressive and conservative views in Kantian animal ethics. That even the most detailed and highly developed Kantian contributions to animal ethics have not managed to overcome them should move us to consider the remaining strategic alternative, a radically progressive approach. Such an approach would tackle the problem of the exclusion of animals from moral concern at its root, specifically, by denying that mutual constraint is a necessary condition for the existence of duties towards others.

Like the other approaches, a radically progressive approach faces a specific challenge: it must show that its transformation of Kantianism does not sacrifice too much of what makes Kantianism worthwhile to begin with. One danger is that Kantianism simply could become incoherent without the idea of mutual constraint. Another is that the resulting ethical framework would no longer be recognizably Kantian. In order to be a helpful and interesting addition to the discussion in animal ethics, Kantianism needs to remain coherent and recognizable, even when it accounts for duties towards animals.

Developing such an approach to Kantian animal ethics is beyond the scope of this paper (that is the project of Müller, *forthcoming*). Allow me just to point out some reasons for general optimism here.

First, in contrast to many of today’s Kantians, including Korsgaard, Kant himself did not heavily rely on the idea of a mutually shared moral law to derive specific duties. His picture is not that duties arise directly from claims others make. They derive from two general “ends that are at the same time duties” (MS 6:382-388), which are the happiness of others and (what Kant calls) one’s own moral perfection. This origin story of our duties to others is largely independent from the idea of mutual constraint. As Timmermann has pointed out, “Kant would have rejected the idea that obligation is essentially interpersonal; his theory of obligation is fundamen-

tally and radically first-personal” (Timmermann 2014, 131). So the task of a radical progressive in Kantian animal ethics is not so much to *replace* Kant’s theory of interpersonal duties with an entirely different one but to *reinforce* the first-personal characteristics that Kant’s theory already exhibits. Framed in this way, the project of coherently revising Kant’s ethical system to make it recognize duties towards animals does not appear hopeless at all.

Second, there are many features besides the idea of mutual constraint that could make Kant’s philosophy an independent voice in animal ethics. Kant’s philosophy derives duties from autonomy rather than from an axiology of pleasure and pain or a conception of the good life (as in utilitarianism and virtue ethics). It views duties as primary over moral rights or claims (in contrast to rights theory). It also incorporates an intricate taxonomy of duties, distinguishing duties of right from those of virtue, duties **toward** oneself from those **toward** others, duties of love from those of respect, and perfect duties from imperfect ones. This provides a vocabulary and a body of thought that cannot be found in animal ethics. So there is ample potential for a Kantian ethics, revised so that it does without the idea of mutual constraint, to provide an independent and worthwhile perspective on issues in animal ethics.

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