

Sentience and Striving in a Theory of Justice for Animals

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Abstract My forthcoming book Justice for Animals commends and elaborates an account of justice for animals based on my Capabilities Approach (CA). The theory aims at supporting animals' strivings in central areas, focusing on the diverse goals each type of creature aims to attain (with much latitude for individual diversity and choice within a species). Understanding injustice as the wrongful impeding of a sentient animal's characteristic life-activities, I define minimal justice as protection of Central Animal Capabilities, up to a reasonable threshold. But which creatures are capable of significant striving? In this paper I argue that they are the creatures who have the elusive property of sentience, meaning that the world looks like something to these creatures, and they strive for the good as they see it. After providing a general philosophical account of sentience and how to look for it, I examine scientific evidence for finding this property (and the related abilities of perception, desire, and emotion) in a variety of animal species. I conclude that all vertebrates and many invertebrates are sentient.