

Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF  
MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH & REVIEWS

journal homepage: [www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home](http://www.ijmrr.online/index.php/home)

ETHICS OF CARE AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY  
TOWARDS ANIMALS

Samir Ali

Assistant Professor

Department of Philosophy

F.A.Ahmed College, Garoimari, Assam, India

[E-mail:samirbpta@gmail.com](mailto:samirbpta@gmail.com)

**How to Cite the Article:** Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

 <https://doi.org/10.56815/ijmrr.v5i4.2026.63-75>

Keywords	Abstract
<i>Ethics of Care,</i> <i>Animal Ethics,</i> <i>Moral Responsibility,</i> <i>Compassion,</i> <i>Relational Ethics,</i> <i>Anthropocentrism.</i>	Ethical issues relating to the moral status of animals and the degree of human responsibility to animals have become a key point in modern ethical debate, especially in the view of ecological crises, industrial exploitation of animals and developing perceptions of animal sentience. The conventional ethical theories, including utilitarianism and rights-based ethics, have provided powerful theories to apply to animal ethics, but they both tend to work with abstract concepts that ignore emotional interaction, relationships, and moral experiences. The ethics of care started as a critique of mainstream paradigms of justice offers an approach to morality that is relational and context-sensitive, which prefigures empathy, compassion, interdependence, and responsibility. The paper discusses ethics of care as a moral theory of the human responsibility towards animals. It identifies the philosophical roots of care ethics, examines its key ideas, compares it to the mainstream anthropocentric ethical approaches, and determines its applicability to the field of animal ethics. The paper also interprets modern problems like



[The work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution  
Non Commercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

	animal farming, experimentation, wildlife preservation, and environmental pollution. Lastly, the paper states that ethics of care provides a morally attractive and pragmatically-based methodology of supporting more human and sustainable human-animal relationships.
--	--

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The relationships between humans and animals have always been determined by utility, dominance and instrumentation logic. The use of animals as food, labor, researchers, entertainers, and companions has been done without much ethical care and concern about how animals suffer or live. Although the moral philosophy has always dealt with obligations between human beings, moral status of animals was always secondary until the advent of modern animal ethics in the twentieth century. To this day, the mass exploitation of animals has not decreased even with the increased knowledge of animal sensitivity and the interdependence of the environment.

The mainstream ethical theories of animal concerns, especially utilitarianism and rights theory, have played a major role in extending the moral concern beyond human beings. Nevertheless, such methods tend to focus on abstract morality, objectivity, and generality, which might poorly reflect the applied experiences of human-animal associations. They are inclined to perceive moral responsibility as calculations of pleasure and pain or recognition of rights and ignore emotions, care practices and contextual responsibilities.

Ethics of care was a reaction of an abstract moral paradigm. Care ethics, first expressed in feminist moral philosophy, is relational, empathetic, attentive and responsible of morality based on concrete relationships as opposed to generalized rules. Although ethics of care were initially used in human relations especially in caregiving situations, it has been extended to environmental and animal ethics.

This essay will examine how the ethics of care could be used to provide a solid moral concept to comprehend human responsibility towards animals. It claims that animals are not objects of moral calculation but relational individuals who humans have relationships of dependency and vulnerabilities. Ethics of care offers a better and more applicable approach to animal ethics by foregrounding care, compassion, and responsibility.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review represents a critical and systematic interaction with the existing scholarly literature in a given area of interest. Instead of summarizing past studies, it will compare, correlate and synthesize the major theoretical stances, and results of past research to locate the current study in an already existing academic discussion. The literature can be found on feminist ethics, animal ethics, environmental ethics, and anthropocentrism critique in the ethics of care and human responsibility towards animals. This review highlights major contributions to these areas and points to the theoretical gap that the current study is aimed at filling.



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

Care ethics is generally said to have its roots in the writing of Carol Gilligan, who In a Different Voice (1982) criticized prevailing justice-based theories of moral reasoning. Gilligan claimed that the mainstream moral philosophies especially those inspired by Kohlberg gave more preference to abstract moral principles like rights and autonomy at the expense of relational moral reasoning which is emotion-focused. Her work was the foundation of the interpretation of morality as a relationship, dependence, and responsiveness. Nevertheless, the main concern of Gilligan was human moral development, and the use of care ethics to non-human animals was mostly implicit.

This philosophical development of this ethical framework was furthered by Nel Noddings who defined morality as a result of concrete relations of caring, instead of moral rules (Noddings, 1984). Noddings focused on attentiveness, receptivity, and responsibility, claiming that the moral obligation is contextual and interpersonal. Although her work focused mainly on human caregiving situations, it provided conceptual possibilities of extending care ethics to animals, particularly those in other forms of dependency relationships with humans.

Utilitarian and rights-based approaches, on the other hand, have influenced the prevailing literature in animal ethics. Moral consideration was based on the ability to suffer and sentience by utilitarian philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and Peter Singer (Singer, 1975). This solution has greatly extended moral consideration to animals, but has been criticized to diminish ethical duty to aggregate sums of joy and suffering. The rights theorists such as Tom Regan believed that animals are intrinsically valuable as subjects-of-a-life, and hence have moral rights that are inviolable (Regan, 1983). Although this perspective offers a high degree of moral protection, critics observe that the perspective is based on abstract standards and relatively insensitive to relational settings.

Others, especially Virginia Held, have more recently broadened care ethics to global, environmental, and animal ethics (Held, 2006). Held contends that care ethics would be able to deal with systemic injustices and macro-level moral issues when combined with other ethical systems. Environmental ethicists also have highlighted interdependence, vulnerability and ecological responsibility, which is rather close to care-based moral reasoning.

Regardless of these changes, animal ethics, environmental ethics, and care ethics are commonly viewed as distinct fields in the existing literature. Integrative research employing systematically care ethics to animal agriculture, experimentation, companion animals, and wildlife in the ecological crisis context is still needed. The current work fills this gap by uniting care ethics with animal ethics and environmental responsibility and hence, provides a relational and compassionate approach to re-evaluating the moral duties of human beings towards animals.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current research design is qualitative and theoretical research design based on philosophical inquiry. The normative type of ethics inquiry, the research does not use any empirical experimentation or statistical analysis and instead employs critical interpretation, comparative analysis and conceptual clarification as the means of exploring the ethics of care and human responsibility towards animals. The



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

choice of the materials and methods is to answer the main research questions: How do the ethics of care conceptualize moral responsibility to animals? and In what ways does this framework provide an alternative to utilitarian and rights-based approaches in the face of modern animal and environmental issues?

### **Materials**

The major materials to be used in this study are the classical and modern philosophical writings regarding ethics of care, animal ethics and environmental ethics. The major primary sources are the works by the founders such as Carol Gilligan (In a Different Voice), Nel Noddings (Caring), Peter Singer (Animal Liberation) and Tom Regan (The Case for Animal Rights). These readings offer the conceptualization underpinning the analysis of competing ethical theories. Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly monographs, and edited volumes on feminist ethics, ecological ethics, anthropocentrism, and relationships of humans and animals are all considered as secondary materials. The sources were reliable and relevant as reputable academic databases and university library resources were used.

### **Methods**

The study uses the conceptual-analytic approach, which includes close reading and critical analysis of texts of choice. To begin with, care, vulnerability, responsibility, sentience, rights, and the anthropocentrism were learned as key concepts and discussed in their theoretical contexts. Second, a comparative ethical analysis was carried out to identify similarities and differences between the care ethics, utilitarianism, and rights-based ethics especially in their treatment of animals. Third, the paper uses care ethics to specific practical scenarios, namely animal agriculture, experimentation, companion animals, and wildlife conservation, to address the **implication of the ethics**.

A synthesizing and interpretive method was used throughout the analysis in order to correlate theories and arguments that already exist and not summarizing them. They did not need any specific equipment or empirical tools since the research is founded on textual analysis and normative arguments. Such a methodology approach brings about clarity, rigor, and replicability to scholars who carry out the same philosophical inquiries.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

The current philosophical inquiry provides some major conclusions on the ethics of care and human responsibility in animals. To begin with, the paper concludes that the ethics of care offers a relational concept of moral responsibility that is fundamentally different to ethical approaches based on principles. Moral obligation to animals is demonstrated to be based on dependent and vulnerable and power imbalance relationships and not on abstract rights or utility consideration. Animals especially those in domesticated, captive or industrial settings are recognized as very sensitive to human activities and their survival and welfare.



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

Second, the discussion reveals that care ethics acknowledges emotional abilities, e.g. empathy, compassion, and attentiveness, as valid and essential aspects of moral reasoning. In contrast to the conventional theories of ethics which emphasize rationality that is not biased, the care ethics admit that the moral consciousness is often raised in the course of affective involvement in the suffering of animals. This observation brings out the ethical relevance of lived experiences in determining ethical responsibility.

Third, care ethics have patterns of application to the practical situation. With regards to animal agriculture, the findings suggest that industrial farming is a systematic failure in regard to the moral aspect of care because it hides the experiences of the individual animals and also because it promotes efficiency rather than the welfare. The study in animal experimentation identifies that care ethics promotes harm reduction, ethical supervision as well as the creation of alternatives. Among companion animals, long-term commitment and attentiveness are highlighted as key moral requirements in the case. Lastly, ecological degradation is described as a breach of relational responsibility in ecology and environmental contexts by care ethics.

### ***Discussions***

The results of this research are consistent with and generalizable to the existing studies in the field of care ethics, animal ethics, and environmental philosophy.

The paper is especially topical in the frames of modern ecological disasters, when only abstract ethical principles have been unable to inspire an ethical activity. Foregrounding care, empathy and responsibility are normative frameworks provided by the ethics of care that can be used to inform the process of humane practice, policy making and moral consideration in human-animal interactions. Below some of the key points are discussed.

#### ***4.1. Old fashioned moral attitudes to animals.***

It is necessary to briefly evaluate the prevailing ethical theory before looking at care ethics in relation to animals.

##### ***4.1.1. Ethics of utilitarianism and animal ethics.***

The utilitarianism is a theory of ethics that is one of the most influential applied to the question of animal morality. Utilitarianism is founded on the concept of utility whereby the moral value of actions is assessed on their consequences in reference to maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. In this context, moral consideration is not based on rationality or autonomy but lies on the ability to suffer.

One of the primary utilitarian inputs into animal ethics was made by Jeremy Bentham, who wrote that the question on whether beings can reason or speak is not the moral one, but whether they can suffer (Bentham, 1789/2007). By changing the moral emphasis of intellectual abilities to sentience, Bentham made the moral consideration extend beyond human beings to include the non-human animals. This was



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

a major departure of the conservative anthropocentric morality that was used as an excuse to exploit the animals due to human superiority.

Peter Singer has best developed utilitarian animal ethics in the modern philosophical world. In *Animal Liberation*, Singer defends the equal consideration of interests, according to which the suffering of animals is equal to the moral weight in the same way as the suffering of human beings of similar nature (Singer, 1975). Singer argues that factory farming, animal research, and the use of animals as the source of entertainment are all morally inexcusable since they cause extreme suffering without much necessary. The utilitarianism of Singer has been instrumental in drawing the attention of the public and philosophy to the systematic animal suffering.

In the case of animal ethics, utilitarianism has some significant criticisms despite its strengths. Utilitarianism by making moral responsibility a matter of pleasure and pain calculations runs the risk of losing sight of the intrinsic worth of individual animals. Practices that are harmful can still be justified in morality as long as it is thought to maximize the total utility or yield more aggregate benefits. This may result in ethically distressing inferences, including the defense of extreme human suffering on animals in favor of trivial human benefits. Therefore, although utilitarianism has played a central role in exposing the suffering of animals, its focus on collective ends shows that it has a great weakness in ensuring sufficient protection of animals against exploitation.

#### **4.1.2. Rights-based ethics and animal moral status**

The rights-based ethics presents an effective alternative to the consequentialist strategies because it bases the moral accountability to the animals on the appreciation of the intrinsic worth of the animals instead of utility. Tom Regan is one of the strongest advocates of this opinion because he holds that a significant number of animals can be subjects-of-a-life and thus have moral rights which must be honoured (Regan, 1983). Regan argues that those beings that possess beliefs, desires, perceptions, memory, a sense of what the future holds and an experiential welfare are inherently valuable regardless of how useful they are to other beings.

In this sense, animals are not a resource to serve human purposes, but moral subjects, the fundamental rights of which, which include the right not to be victimized or treated as objects of action, entail severe limitations on human activity. The rights-based ethics therefore offers strong moral security to animals and may also offer a solid criticism against the practice of factory farming, animal experimentation and commercial exploitation (Regan, 1983). In contrast to utilitarianism which may justify harm in case it results in more overall good, the rights-based ethics is categorically opposed to an action that infringes on the rights of an individual.

Nevertheless, there are also serious criticisms in this approach. The fact that it is based on certain cognitive and psychological requirements of being moral may preclude some animals, which do not obviously fit the requirements of being a subject-of-a-life. Also, the emphasis on abstract rights and moral boundaries might ignore the relational and contextual and human-animal relations.. Consequently,



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

the critics say that rights-based ethics are morally rigorous, but they might not be flexible to accommodate the morality of the real world relationship to animals.

#### **4.1.3. Limitations of traditional ethical approaches**

The classical ethical theories to animal morality, especially the utilitarianism and the rights-based morality, have in common the attitude to impartiality, abstraction and moral universality. All these features allow conceptual clarity and normative consistency, but they also expose significant limitations as used in the complicated realities of human-animal relationships. By giving preference to objective thinking and universal norms, the two systems have the tendency of shunning emotional and relational aspects that are vital in moral living (Singer, 1975; Regan, 1983).

Utilitarianism considers moral actions by the measure of calculation of pleasure and pain and usually considers animals as equal units in an aggregate calculus of welfare. This disinterested evaluation may ignore the personality of animals and the ethical value of loving relationships. The rights-based ethics is equally based on abstract moral entitlements that are based on cognitive criteria, which can disqualify some animals or not account to the moral responsibilities that are a result of particular human-animal relationships as in the case of domesticated or dependent animals (Regan, 1983).

In addition, the two methods have difficulties in explaining moral feelings like empathy, compassion, and attentiveness which often drive the moral care of animals in the daily life. Through the failure to capture these affective and relational dimensions, the traditional theories would run the risk of providing a moral advice that would be unrelated to the lived experience. To address these drawbacks, the ethics of care predicts relations, exposure, and contextual accountability, which states that the moral duty to animals is not just based on general principles but also on specific habits of caring and responsiveness (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984).

#### **4.2.1. Philosophical foundations of the ethics of care**

Ethics of care is a relatively new term in the late twentieth century that developed as an important criticism against the prevailing forms of moral theory that were more or less based on rationalism, individualism, and abstract universal values. Conventional ethical theories were particularly those that were dominant in moral psychology and moral philosophy, and they were more inclined to focus on objective reasoning, judgment by rules, and independent moral agents. It is against this backdrop that care ethics provided a different vision of morality that preempted relationships, emotional responsiveness, and contextual responsibility.

Carol Gilligan (1982) in her seminal work *In a Different Voice* (1982) made a contribution to the development of care ethics. Gilligan has critically analyzed the theory of moral development that has been developed by Lawrence Kohlberg, in which moral maturity was categorized by the capacity of an individual to reason based on abstract principles of justice, rights and fairness. Gilligan proposed that Kohlbergs paradigm tacitly privileged a kind of justice orientation, which has traditionally been a feature of masculine moral reasoning, and disadvantaged a care orientation, which has traditionally been a



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

feature of feminine moral reasoning. Gilligan acknowledges that moral reasoning based on care is not inferior or immature and is a different and equally valid way of moral reasoning.

As a continuation of the findings of Gilligan, care ethics was further philosophically developed by Nel Noddings who has been able to express a full-fledged moral theory focusing on the lived experience of caring relations. Noddings did not believe in the priority of abstract moral principles and universal duties and informed that ethical action is a result of practical experience with other needy people. Morality to her starts with being sensitive to the other, emotionally open to their vulnerability, being truly engaged to act responsibly. In such a perspective, moral responsibility is not based on impersonal principles but is based on relational interaction and situational awareness.

The ethics of care has several important characteristics. First, it is based on a relational ontology which perceives human beings as essentially interdependent and not independent and self-contained individuals. Moral agents are implemented in the systems of relationships, which define their duties and identities. Second, care ethics focuses on emotional involvement, and it accepts emotions (empathy, compassion, concern) as not barriers to moral reasoning but as vital sources of moral insight. Third, it embraces contextual moral reasoning, which argues that moral judgments should be sensitive to specific circumstances, histories and relationships instead of applying general rules strictly. Lastly, care ethics places the emphasis of responsibility over rights, which implies that the moral obligation is mainly brought about by the relationships of dependence, vulnerability, and power and not by the right claims.

Though the ethics of care was first created in the framework of intimate relationships, including that of a parent and their child, a nanny and their charge, or a member of a community, it has since come to encompass more general issues of morality. Modern theorists have also extended care ethics to the problem of social justice, environmental responsibility, and animal ethics, suggesting that due to its focus on vulnerability, interdependence, and compassionate responsibility, care ethics provides a potent alternative to anthropocentric and instrumental ethical approaches. By doing this, care ethics has become an important and developing concept in the contemporary ethics theory.

#### **4.2.2. Ethics of care and the moral status of animals**

The ethics of care provides a considerable challenge to anthropocentric forms of ethics that introduce the interests of human beings as central to the issue of morality. Care ethics instead of considering animals as resources or human tools, sees them as vulnerable creatures, existing in intricate webs of interdependence and relationships with people. In most modern settings like domestication, captivity, scientific experimentation and industrial farming, animals depend greatly on human beings to feed them, shelter, protect and free them of misery. This structural dependency creates some unique moral obligations that are mostly poorly tackled by conventional theories of ethics (Noddings, 1984).

Care ethics view of animal moral responsibility is not based on the fact that they have abstract rights or add to human utility, but rather they are vulnerable and powerless in relation to the asymmetrical power that humans have over their lives. Man is in charge of the environment in which animals are kept, reproduced and die; this power comes with the moral responsibility to act in a



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

responsive manner responsibly and without causing harm. Moral responsibility is not based on common moral rules but on relationships that are dependent and responsive as pointed out by Gilligan (1982).

Care ethics also emphasizes the moral significance of caring about the suffering of animals and their desire to respond to their specific needs. Ethical action is a view of animals as sentient creatures who can have a share of harm and distress and act in ways that enhance their welfare. In contrast to the rights-based approach or the rationalist approach, the care approach does not demand animals to satisfy certain cognitive or language standards in order to deserve moral attention. Their vulnerability to damage and the reliance on human beings are enough factors to make them be morally concerned (Held, 2006).

The ethics of care expands the moral community to non-human animals by focusing on the ethics of responsibility, empathy and contextual judgement. It therefore offers an ethically interesting structure in how human beings can reconsider their duties to animals in a manner that is responsive to their vulnerability and entrapment within human-dominated structures.

#### **4.2.3. The role of human beings towards animals.**

##### **4.2.3. i Animals in agriculture**

The industrial animal agriculture is one of the most vast and ethically questionable points of human-animal contact in the contemporary world. Every year, billions of animals are raised in intensive confinement systems that do not consider the well being of the animals, but rather focus on efficiency, productivity as well as economical gains. Overcrowding, forced breeding, mutilation without anesthesia, and premature slaughter are some of the practices that in a systematic manner ignore the physical and psychological pain of animals. In the ethics of care, this kind of practice is considered to be ethically problematic not only due to the suffering, but also due to the fact that it displays a dramatic lack of attentiveness, compassion, and moral responsibility towards vulnerable beings (Singer, 1975; Noddings, 1984).

The care ethics stresses the importance of relationships that have a dependency and power asymmetry in terms of morality. The livestock is virtually at the mercies of humans to survive, live and prosper. This addiction leads to an increased moral necessity to act with concern and not profiteering. Care theorists argue that moral responsibility is a resultant response to the need of other persons in particular relational situations and not just the abstract computations of harm or good (Gilligan, 1982). Industrial systems of farming, nevertheless, obscure the experiences of the individual animals and regard them as interchangeable units of production, and therefore destroys the prospect of true moral responsiveness.

A care ethics model requires a long-term concern with the experiences of farm animals and requires agricultural methods to reduce animal suffering, enhance well-being, and sustain the integrity of animals. This can involve the increase of welfare levels, minimization of intensive confinement, and creation of humane farming options. Besides, care ethics can back up ethical vegetarianism or veganism as moral reactions that aim at minimizing engagement in structures of harm and neglect. Care ethics



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

provides an attractive ethical framework by means of foregrounding empathy, responsibility, and relational awareness to reconsider the human practices in animal agriculture and build more compassionate and sustainable food systems.

#### **4.2.3. ii. Experimentation of animals and pets.**

Animal research involves complicated and enduring ethical issues, especially the rationale of causing harm to the vulnerable non-human organism. The utilitarian theories tend to justify animal research on the basis of possible human gain, possibly through medical breakthroughs or scientific understanding. According to care ethics, though, such justification falls short in the moral justification of the suffering that animals experience, and the responsibilities that humans owe towards their fellow animals. According to care ethics, there is a serious moral burden involved in inflicting harm on dependent beings and as such this requires an increase in ethical sensitivity and not merely the outcome-driven logic (Singer, 1975; Noddings, 1984).

The care-based approach to animal experimentation requires that people be sensitive to the suffering of animals, responsive to their needs, and committed to the reduction of harm. This view advocates the adoption and utilisation of alternative research methods, like in vitro testing, computer modelling, and ethical sourced human data, where feasible. The care ethics require that of strict ethical control, reduction in the number of animals used, and refinement of the procedures, in order to mitigate pain and distress, when the use of animals is considered necessary. In this context, moral responsibility is not due to some abstract benefit calculation but to the awareness of vulnerability and dependency in the research environments created and controlled by human beings (Held, 2006).

Care ethics can be well exemplified by human relationships with companion animals. Pets have found their way into the human homes and are considered to be family members and not properties. Moral responsibility towards companion animals is based on emotional bonds, care about their physical and mental needs, and commitment to take care of them over a long period. The failure to take care of pets, abuse, or abandonment is a grave moral failure, because it is the violation of trust and responsibility in a dependent relationship (Gilligan, 1982).

Care ethics perspective reveals the ethical treatment of companion animals as highlighting the general moral lesson that ethical responsibility towards animal is based on empathy, relational awareness, and long-term commitment. The principles are a challenge to instrumental attitudes and a re-assertion of the moral importance of care in the development of humane human-animal relationships.

#### **4.2.3. iii. Wildlife and environmental responsibility**

The ethics of care takes the moral responsibility of individual animals and applies it to wildlife and the whole ecosystem. Habitat destruction, deforestation, climate change, and environmental pollution are human activities that introduce numerous and usually unnoticed damages to millions of animals by interrupting the ecological conditions under which they survive. In terms of care ethics, these harms are a



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

malfuction of care and carelessness towards vulnerable creatures whose life is seriously impacted by human activities (Held, 2006).

Care-based ethic focuses on human relationships with the natural world that ought to be stewarded, coexist, and be humble. Care ethics is much more aware of the profound interdependence among humans, animals and ecological systems, instead of dominating over nature. The moral responsibility comes into being through the realization that the well-being of humans cannot be separated with that of ecosystems and existence of wildlife (Gilligan, 1982). This interpersonal knowledge opposes exploitative environmentalism and demands sustainable lifestyles **that do not exceed ecological boundaries**.

Care ethics offers an ethical basis in the form of foregrounded empathy and contextual responsibility to offer a moral rationale in protecting the environment. It promotes policies and practices that are conservation-oriented, biodiversity and climate conscious and focuses on taking care of the current and future generations of both human and non-human life (Noddings, 1984).

#### **4.3. Ethics of care, anthropocentrism, and ecological crisis**

Ethical, economic and political approaches to nature have long been influenced by anthropocentrism the perception of human interest as being morally superior to non-human beings. This perception of the world has justified massive destruction of the environment and systematic exploitation of animals by considering them as a source of human consumption. The ethics of care provides a strong confrontation to anthropocentrism by focusing on interdependence in relations as opposed to human superiority. It sees humans, animals, and nature as collaborative ecological agents, whose moral responsibility is based on vulnerability and dependence and not superiority.

The ethics of care advocates an ethic of responsibility based on humility, attentiveness and relational sensitivity in the context of the modern ecological crisis. Climate change, loss of biodiversity and environmental pollution are not technical issues but ethical failures that are based on ignorance and apathy to non-human life. Care ethics emphasize that any harm done to animals and ecosystems will be returned to the human societies, affecting health, food security and survival. This awareness confronts the belief that human prosperity is possible without environmental health.

Care ethics shows environmental responsibility as a practice rather than an attitude by repurposing instrumental attitudes towards nature and making environmental responsibility a continuous process of caring about the current and future generations. Animal care, ecosystem care and environment care therefore becomes inseparable with care of the humans themselves. By so doing, the ethics of care offers a morally based approach to the ecological crisis due to compassion, responsibility and sustainable coexistence.

#### **4.4. Critiques and challenges of applying care ethics to animals**

The use of the ethics of care has not gone without criticism in spite of its numerous contributions to animal ethics. Part of the issues is one of partiality. Opponents contend that care ethics is prone to



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

moral favoritism as it favors animals of whom humans have strong emotional relationships, such as companion animals, but not the more remote, wild, or invisible ones. The consequence of this selective concern is unequal moral attention so that mass suffering in situations such as industrial farming or loss of habitat can be inadequately considered.

The other difficulty is the absence of moral principles. Care ethics do not provide strict rules or universal decision-making principles, as opposed to utilitarianism or the rights-based approach to ethics. This flexibility may manifest itself as moral ambiguity in complex moral dilemmas, including human survival and animal welfare conflicts. Critics would argue that care ethics can fail to give consistent and practical moral judgments in varying circumstances unless there are clear guidelines.

Another weakness is with respect to scalability. Care ethics is also very tied up with face-to-face relationships and localized contexts of care, casting doubt on its extension to global ethical problems. Relational ethics might not appear able to handle large-scale policy interventions to address systemic issues like industrial animal agriculture, climate change, or biodiversity loss.

Nonetheless, advocates of care ethics believe that such problems do not decrease the moral worth of care ethics. They instead propose that care ethics should be incorporated with wider ethical theories, including justice-based and institutional ethics, to deal with large-scale problems. Care ethics can supplement the other methods by retaining its relational and compassionate core and offer a morally sensitive ground to the humane and ecologically responsible human-animal relations.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The current paper has explored the ethics of care as a moral theory of human responsibility to animals to answer the main research questions about the establishment of moral obligation to non-human entities and the differences between the ethics of care and the prevailing ethical theories. The critical approach to care ethics and the utilitarian and rights-based theory has proven that moral responsibility to animals is most effectively viewed as relational, context-specific, and based on vulnerability and dependence as opposed to the abstract principles or instrumental computations.

The study notes that care ethics provides a unique ethical orientation by preemption of attentiveness, empathy, and responsiveness to animal suffering. In contrast to utilitarianism which tends to simplify moral decisions to aggregate means of pleasure and pain, or rights based ethics, which appeals to strict moral standards, care ethics focuses on lived relationships and power imbalances between human beings and animals. This relational emphasis is also of crucial importance in the situations, like industrial animal farming, scientific experimentation, companionship, and preservation of wildlife, where animals are so much subject to human intervention. The paper therefore confirms that care ethics offers a morally viable answer to the modern issues of animal ethics and environmental responsibility.

Simultaneously, the research recognizes some shortcomings. The research lacks empirical information or case studies based on particular cultural or legal settings as a philosophical and normative inquiry. This



Samir Ali (2026). *Ethics of Care and Human Responsibility towards Animals*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews. 5(4). 63-75.

restricts the possibility of evaluating the practical application of care ethics to policy-making, institutional structure, or practice. Furthermore, care ethics is confronted with the issue of bias, the absence of clear decision guidelines and scalability when applying the ethic to large scale world issues like industrial farming and loss of biodiversity. These constraints imply that more research is necessary to incorporate care ethics and justice-based principles, legal, and empirical evidence.

In spite of these restrictions, the consequences of this study are considerable. The ethics of care shifts the dominance and instrumentalizing moral discourse to responsibility and compassion, and it provides a system that rings quite deafeningly in an era of ecological crisis. Care ethics proposes that animals, animals, and ecosystems cannot be separated as they interdepend on one another. Future studies can focus on cross-cultural approaches, such as non-Western moral cultures, and investigate how care ethics can be used to shape the policy of the state, education, and sustainability.

To sum up, this paper highlights the seriousness and applicability of care ethics in re-evaluating the human moral responsibility to animals. It leads to the continuing ethical discussions since it provides a vision of coexistence that is relational and humane in its nature, inviting further academic research and practical implementation in the accomplishment of the ethical dilemmas that surround human-animal relationships.

#### **AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION**

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

#### **PLAGIARISM POLICY**

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

#### **SOURCES OF FUNDING**

The authors received no financial aid to support for the research.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice*. Harvard University Press.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. University of California Press.
- Singer, P. (1975). *Animal Liberation*. HarperCollins.
- Regan, T. (1983). *The Case for Animal Rights*. University of California Press.
- Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press.
- Bentham, J. (2007). *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*. Dover Publications. (Original work published 1789).

