

Killing non human persons:

Some non-human animals are persons, as we have defined the term. To judge the significance of this we must set it in the context of our earlier discussions, in which I argued that the only defensible version of the doctrine of the sanctity of personal life. I suggested that if human life does have special value or a special claim to be protected, it has it in so far as most human beings are persons. But if some non human animals are persons, too the lives of those animals must have the same special value or claim to protection. Whether we base these special moral features of the lives of human persons on preferential utilitarianism, on a right to life deriving from their capacity to see themselves as continuing selves, or on respect for autonomy, these arguments must apply to non human persons since non humans are less likely than humans to learn about killings that take place at a distance from them. But then, this reason does not apply to all killings of human persons either since it is possible to kill in such a way that no one learns that a person has been killed.

Hence we should reject the doctrine that places the lives of members of our species above the lives of members of other species. Some members of other species are persons. Some members of our own species are not. No objective assessment can support the view that it is always worse to kill members of our species

