

Do we have any obligations towards animals? If so, what is their nature? Due to the development of the natural sciences, the Cartesian vision of an "animal-machine" collapsed. As a consequence, the boundary between humans and animals is no longer as clear as it was once believed. This trend has gone so far that, according to some thinkers, the differences between humans and animals are only quantitative, not qualitative. In the literature on animal studies, the authors more and more often use the term "non-human animals" to further emphasize the disappearance of qualitative differences between humans and animals. This shift in optics, along with the emergence of industrial breeding and the increased awareness of the human impact on the environment, led to the question of an ethical evaluation of our behavior towards animals, which in turn gave rise to one of the most important moral debates of the second half of the twentieth century. Philosophers such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan began to question our traditional animal practices, arguing that there are no morally relevant differences between humans and animals. Philosophers such as J. Narveson and P. Carruthers have questioned this view. By claiming that there is, however, a difference between humans and animals that makes it impossible to include them in the circle of the moral community. They base their arguments on the tradition of the social contract theory, and it is in the social contract that they see the source of subjectivity. In the context of animals (and also of some people), however, the following problem arises. Only rational individuals who can participate in negotiations in a manner enabling the mutual creation of appropriate moral obligations can join the contract. "Concluding" a social contract with animals is therefore impossible because animals cannot negotiate a contract even in a hypothetical sense - because they are not rational enough and do not speak the language. They are also unable to regulate their behavior based on the rules of the contract. The following conclusion can be drawn from the above: animals are not rational enough to make a contract or obey its provisions and, therefore, cannot be moral subjects.

The main goal of the project is to conduct a theoretical analysis of the ability to develop a theory of social contract that takes into account the status of animals. If such a theoretical construct turns out to be possible, the subsequent goal of the project will be to use it to evaluate Polish regulations regarding animals and propose *de lege ferenda* solutions. In the first part of the project, M. Rowlands' concept will be evaluated. According to Rowlands, it is possible to include animals in the circle of moral subjects from the perspective of John Rawls' contract theory. Rowlands modifies Rawls's thought experiment by claiming that in the original position, when deciding the foundations of morality from behind a veil of ignorance, animals should also be granted rights. Rowlands' argument is based on a non-standard interpretation of the veil of ignorance, according to which we do not know not only about such features as intelligence or property but also whether we will be human on the other side. The project aims to point out the strengths and weaknesses of Rowlands' concept and consider the possibility of justifying the subjectivity of animals in contract theories other than Rawlsian. The subject of determining the animal status in the legacy of the social contract has still not been sufficiently recognized in world literature. Moreover, there are no significant publications in this regard in Polish, and only a few authors mention it. Additionally, when writing about a social contract, it is usually in a contractualistic sense, and the contractarian approach is rarely explored. The two methods of contemporary analytical philosophy will be used in the research project: 1) logical analysis of essential terms and concepts and 2) reflective equilibrium method.