Political Liberalism and the Issue of Disagreement on Animal Treatment

Abstract: This paper addresses the problem of the treatment of animals in Rawls’s thought. In Political Liberalism animals are the possible object of an extension of the domain of justice. However, what public reason arrives at about the treatment of animals is inconclusive, and, hence, we are left with what comprehensive doctrines tell us about them. Even if animals are not included as members in the original position or as parties in social cooperation, I argue that there are some resources in Rawls’s theory of justice to deal with animals. I conclude by suggesting that a reformulation of the procedure of public justification may address this problem.

Keywords: Animals, Marginal cases, Public reason, Rawls.