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## **From Property to Legal Personality? Changes in the Legal Status of Animals**

The Animal Rights Committee of the Israeli Bar Association has prepared a Draft Bill according to which, animals will be defined as sensitive creatures that are not an object. What does this characterization of animals mean? Specifically, how can an animal not be an object and yet remain under human control? The purpose of the article is to try to clarify these questions and to analyze seminal issues in relation to the legal status of animals.

The definition of animals as sentient beings, which cannot be considered objects, is dubbed de-objectification. To understand the meaning of this expression, it is important to understand the tension between two approaches to human-animal relations: Welfarism and Abolitionism. While the former advocates improving the condition of animals without abolishing their exploitation, the latter opposes any exploitation of animals. This article identifies the Draft Bill as lying between these two approaches, i.e., as a more advanced version of welfarism. By not abolishing animal ownership the Bill reflects a pragmatic approach which balances between different interests.

Many European countries have adopted similar rules to the Draft Bill. In fact, even in Israeli law today, animals, and especially pets, enjoy a different legal status than the inanimate. If so, what is the goal of the Draft Bill? According to the article, if the de-objectification is legally accepted, short of its symbolic impact, it will contribute in different ways to animal protection.

Is it possible to ask why not directly determine that animals be considered a legal entity and in this way protect them more broadly? The discussion about giving legal personality to animals is consistent with the expansion of the legal personality concept. Today there is a trend to recognize natural sites or even artificial intelligence as legal entities. This article deals with these topics and also refers to instances where animals are seemingly referred to as autonomous entities. However, conclusions that can be drawn from these cases are ambiguous.

The article supports the Draft Bill, as it serves to advance the interests of animals without provoking severe opposition which may prevent any further progress.