

entity only if that entity can fulfill reciprocal duties. Most of Watson's article is an attack on Singer's view of animal rights. He argues that rights must be earned and that sentient beings who cannot be moral agents cannot be said to have rights.

A moral agent is defined as any agent that does, or intends to, fulfill duties. This requires that the agent have the following characteristics: (1) self-consciousness (knowledge that something is happening to oneself), (2) capability of understanding moral principles about rights and duties, (3) freedom to act either according to or opposed to given principles of duty, (4) understanding of given principles of duty, (5) physical capability of acting according to duty, and (6) intention to act according to or opposed to given principles of duty. This is referred to as a reciprocity framework.

Watson claims that the mere possession of sentience or life does not endow an entity with the right to life or to relief from unnecessary suffering. The capacity for physical or mental suffering is not a sufficient condition of having interests or rights. The reciprocity framework is not arbitrary or self-serving in the sense that it applies to humans only. Many animals, he concedes, meet the six criteria: "Some chimpanzees, gorillas (probably orangutans and perhaps gibbons), dolphins, (probably whales), elephants, dogs, pigs, and maybe cats and some other animals are sometimes moral agents." (128) Given this framework nature, corporations, the State, and the Church do not qualify as moral entities. Watson addresses arguments designed to justify treating corporations as persons, as responsible moral agents. He argues that the personification of abstract entities does not constitute an advancement in morality because such personification is often used as a means of avoiding individual responsibility.

Although Watson does not wish to deny brain damaged or senile persons the right to life or relief from pain and

RICHARD A. WATSON, "SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE RIGHTS OF NONHUMAN ANIMALS AND NATURE," ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS, I, SUMMER, 1979, PP. 99-129.

Richard Watson attempts to provide a justification for ascribing moral rights to humans but not to (most) animals or nature. He takes the conventional approach to rights, an approach which allows one to attribute a right to an

suffering, his framework does in fact rule out of the moral realm most animals and many human beings, namely, those who will never have or recover the status of a moral agent. Although we have no duties with regard to such nonmoral agents, Watson suggests that we should treat them with kindness. This moral imperative is derived from the fact that we assign "secondary rights" to nonmoral agents and nature. The assignment "is made as a convenience to human interests and does not result in 'real' rights and duties." (p. 105)

Watson never explains why self-consciousness should be considered the determinant of rights. The reciprocity framework is a recommendation and is advanced on the assumption that natural rights do not exist. In addition to begging the issue of speciesism as presented by Singer, Watson obscures the distinction between merited rights and other types of rights that can be granted even if natural rights do not exist. His arguments do not establish that it makes sense to consider the right to life as an earned right equivalent to the right to vote or attend a private meeting.

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