

destroying such species certainly establishes their ecological value, but there is no reason whatsoever to characterize this value as "aesthetic." This is simply metaphorical claptrap. The unity and balance within a healthy ecosystem might be viewed as analogous, in some respects, to the unity and balance within an object of beauty, but it is absurd to attribute "aesthetic value" to a particular species simply because it is an essential part of that ecosystem.

Mr. Rowan next proceeds to argue, unconvincingly, for the relativity of aesthetic value in the traditional sense of beauty. I will not dispute the issue here as to whether beauty is subjective or objective. It is not necessary, however, to maintain that beauty is relative in order to draw the conclusion which he draws, namely, that "a species should not be confined to a moral limbo" on aesthetic grounds. This, indeed, was the whole point of my criticism of Russow, and it is astonishing that Rowan could have so misconstrued my review as to accuse me of precisely what I was criticizing. We evidently both wish to safeguard the moral status of animals against reduction to aesthetic criteria. We differ only in the way we want to do it. Rowan wants to expand the concept of aesthetics to include the pseudo-science of "ecological aesthetics." My contention is that the demonstration of ecological value -- aesthetic or otherwise -- fails to safeguard the rights of animals and at bottom is just as speciesist and homocentric as the aesthetic value criterion in the narrower sense which he rejects. I have yet to see an ecological argument for animal rights which is rooted in genuine moral concern for individual animals rather than (ultimately) a concern for man's own survival.

Replies

(IN RE: E&A II/4, Rowan's reply to Cave's review of Russow's "Why Do Species Matter?")

In his reply to my review, Mr. Andrew Rowan charges me (and Russow) with making a "semantic error" in speaking of the aesthetic value of a species. It is Mr. Rowan's reply, rather, which is semantically confused. There is no error in speaking of the aesthetic value of a species in terms of human perceptions of beauty. It is Mr. Rowan who stretches the meaning of "aesthetic value" beyond all reasonable bounds in contending that visually unattractive species "have aesthetic value as parts of the ecosystem." The example which he gives of the consequences of wantonly

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(IN RE: E&A II/4, Frey's reply to Johnson's review of Frey's Interests and Rights)

Reply to Frey

I am grateful for Frey's careful elucidation of the intentions of his skeptical book, Interests and Rights: The Case Against Animals. I hope a few more remarks of mine may help to advance discussion.

I have considerable sympathy for various forms of moral skepticism, and I would certainly not dismiss any of Frey's interesting questions just for being startling or perverse. When Frey asks, for example, why we should think that pain is intrinsically bad, I perk up immediately: that sounds like a deep question. It may be so deep, in fact, as to be unanswerable. Reflection on such matters might nevertheless serve to turn our entire moral thinking into a new direction, or even incline us to give up moral thinking altogether (probably not). Still, it is important not to get confused about the practical consequences of theoretical obstacles. If the badness of pain is a theoretical problem, it is one for humans as well as nonhumans. If we were reflecting on the people who are being tortured right now, or the people who are at this very moment starving, it would be odd to allow the theoretical question of why pain is bad to derail us completely, if we were trying to make some headway in thinking about practical social policy. In the human case, of course, this is obvious, and so we don't have much difficulty separating our reflections into appropriate layers. Is pain bad? doesn't mess us up when we are asking Is torture ever OK? I worry, though, about the nonhuman case, because it is so easy to take a deep theoretical difficulty as an excuse for facile practical

solutions.

Do animals feel pain? Do animals have interests? Is pain (intrinsically) bad? I take it that Frey's answers to these questions are: Yes, No, and Maybe not, respectively. I would have thought that the answer to the first question (niggling neo-cartesian niceties aside) would be Yes indeed! In his book Frey does deny that animals have any of the following: interests, desires, beliefs, language, perceptions, reasons, emotions, moral feelings. Nevertheless, he allows that at least the "higher" animals can "suffer unpleasant sensations" and so can be "hurt". That, presumably, is what we have in mind when we are concerned about animals feeling pain. But if we are confident about this fact, then what exactly is the significance of the other questions?

It doesn't matter much if non-humans don't have interests or rights unless (a) humans do, and (b) that difference justifies differential treatment. Traditional arguments denying animals rights did assume a and b. Frey may not be making those assumptions, and I applaud that. But what's the upshot?

Frey says that "the very way Johnson writes, of how animal welfare ought to be weighed against human welfare, obscures the upshot that my attack on criteria for conferring moral standing can or does have, namely, that unless this attack can be deflected, it is not clear that a particular theorist, in terms of his own theory, has anything to put on the animal side of the balance." If animals have no interests, Frey suggests, then there is nothing for theorists such as Feinberg and Singer to put "on the animal side to weighed against and to impede the pursuit of human interests".

I must admit I am a little puzzled

by this. If animals can suffer unpleasant sensations and so can be hurt, in a way that demands justification (as Frey admits), then don't animals have a welfare, a welfare that requires moral consideration? I am not particularly concerned (now) to tussle over the word 'welfare', or 'interest'. The point is just that there certainly seems to be something to weigh against human interests--namely, the (fact of the) suffering (or whatever you want to call those unpleasant sensations) of nonhumans. Is the (fact of the) suffering of nonhumans unable to "impede the pursuit of human interests"? I don't see why.

The fact that Frey emphasizes the phrase 'in terms of his own theory' suggests the following argument: although animals-not-having-unpleasant-sensations does count, it cannot fit into the theories of Feinberg and Singer because it isn't an interest, and their theories balance interests against interests (nor can it fit into Regan's theory because it isn't a right, etc.). Frey says, near the end of his reply, that "a theorist cannot weigh what he cannot get into his theory in the first place, and if my attack on the criteria for moral standing . . . succeeds, then we have strong grounds for thinking he cannot encompass animals within his theory".

But what prevents, say, Singer from weighing animals-not-having-unpleasant-sensations against various human interests, whether one chooses to call what the animals have 'interests' or not? Singer talks in terms of weighing interests against interests because he thinks that animals-not-having-unpleasant-sensations is an interest that animals have. Frey argues in his book that it is not an interest, if interest is properly analyzed. Suppose (purely for the sake of argument) that it isn't an interest.

That doesn't show that Singer can't weigh it against human interests.

In the final footnote in Interests and Rights: The Case Against Animals, Frey says this: "If one does come to agree that wantonly inflicting unpleasant sensations on animals is wrong, then an opponent may try . . . to base the moral case for boycotting meat upon the pain and suffering animals endure on factory farms, without bringing in any or any explicit concerns with interests." This possibility, says Frey, he is dealing with in an unpublished book on Modern Moral Vegetarianism. I haven't yet seen how he deals with it, but that is the position that must be dealt with and is not in Interests and Rights, which is why I said in my review that Frey hadn't really presented a case against animals. If there was such a case, I felt, it had yet to be presented. I look forward to Frey's next attempt.

Edward Johnson
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(IN RE: E&A II/2, Devine's reply to Gruzalski's review of Devine's "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism")

Response to Devine

In "The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism," Philip Devine argued that there is neither a utilitarian nor a deontological justification for being a vegetarian. In my criticism of his account, I focused only on his misapplication of utilitarianism. In his article, Devine had argued (a) that "animal experience is so lacking in intensity that the pains of animals are overridden by the pleasures experienced by human beings"(491). In order to use (a) to reach the conclusion that eating animals was permissible on utilitarian grounds, Devine assumed (b) that an action which

produces more pleasure than suffering is permissible on utilitarian grounds. In my criticism of Devine's apology for conventional omnivore behavior, I showed (a') that Devine's reasons for thinking that animal experience lacks intensity did not support the claim he was making. In particular, Devine argued that conceptual richness makes human experiences more intense, but I showed that conceptual richness often makes human experiences less intense and also tends to make nonhuman suffering extremely intense because nonhuman suffering is unmitigated by rationalization, distraction, or awareness of its purpose (this point is also made in Alternatives to Pain, D. Pratt, pp. 14-15). Devine also argued that because animals cannot say to us that they are in pain, we may be justified in thinking that their pains are less intense. But, again, if there is a problem about knowing whether another sentient being is in great pain, this problem will not be solved by discovering that the creatures utters the statement 'It hurts a lot'. That some beings are able to replace loud screams or whining cringes with an utterance does not alter our justification for thinking the being is in great pain. It is true that we may have to become very familiar with some kinds of nonhuman animals in order to gain sufficient expertise to calibrate those pains that are minor from their point of view, but this does not support any weakening of the utilitarian justification of vegetarianism, since, as far as we can tell, the sufferings of nonhuman animals as they are raised and slaughtered for their flesh are as intense as any pains suffered by human animals. Although this is sufficient to undermine Devine's attack on the utilitarian justification for vegetarianism, I also showed (b') that the crucial utilitarian calculation is not whether an action will produce more pleasure than pain, but whether there is any alternative to the action in question that would

produce better results than the action in question. If there is an alternative that would likely produce less pain and more pleasure on the whole, then that is the action to be performed and to do otherwise is to perform a wrong action. Hence, when calculating the amount of human pleasure produced by eating flesh, the utilitarian is only interested in the amount of pleasure that would not occur were we to eat tasty vegetables but only occurs because of eating meat. Since there is excellent evidence for thinking that the amount of pleasure lost by eating only vegetables hovers between the minimal and the nonexistent, it follows that the vegetarian alternative is mandated by utilitarianism, for a minimal or nonexistent amount of pleasure would never outweigh the animal suffering required to put flesh on the table.

In his reply, Devine answers neither criticism, although either undermines his claim to have shown that vegetarianism does not have a solid and compelling moral basis. Devine does repeat a weak version of (a), viz., "the precise issue is the weight to be given the impoverished conceptual structure of animal experience." Of course, this is even further off the mark, since what is at stake is the value we are to place on animal suffering, regardless of "conceptual structure" or abilities to verbalize. Rather than address criticisms (a') and (b'), Devine attacks hedonistic utilitarianism, claiming that hedonistic utilitarianism culminates in "the rejection of utilitarianism as a moral system." That is news to those who articulate and defend hedonistic versions of utilitarianism. Surprisingly, in the same paragraph Devine decides to engage in "playing utilitarianism" italics mine and so claims that he is entitled "to exploit the complexities of suffering and enjoyment." But that depends. If what he means is that there is some theory he can articulate

that is utilitarian according to a textbook definition and that on this theory eating animal flesh is permissible, what would this show? Any strawman account could be constructed, labeled 'utilitarian', and fail to justify our obligations to animals (e.g., imagine a theory in which the only experiences that count among the consequences of our actions are the experiences of the human and the divine). There is, unfortunately, no paucity of inaccurate and strawman accounts of utilitarianism in the "literature". If Devine is truly interested in the question of whether utilitarianism prescribes vegetarianism, he would consider carefully the strongest utilitarian accounts, among which is hedonistic utilitarianism.

That Devine has failed to consider seriously my criticism of the reasons he offered for (a) suggests that he has no response or, perhaps, that he was distracted, as we humans often are. That Devine does not respond to my criticisms of (b) suggests that he does not take utilitarianism seriously enough to examine one of its defensible forms. But for those who do want to get the issue straight, it is worth keeping in mind that the utilitarian will at least consider the following in assessing any action: (1) the foreseeable consequences of the action and the foreseeable consequences of the alternatives; (2) the likelihood of these foreseeable consequences; (3) the value of these foreseeable consequences in terms of pain and pleasure for all the sentient beings affected. Since the foreseeable pleasures of eating tasty vegetables do not produce the intense foreseeable sufferings that nonhuman animals experience in being raised and slaughtered for food, these three considerations constitute a strong case against eating meat or doing anything else that contributes to raising and slaughtering other sentient beings for their flesh.

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(IN RE: E&A II/3 and II/4, Cave's review of Russow's "Why Do Species Matter?" and Rowan's reply thereto.)

Aesthetic Qualities and Moral Judgments

In my article, "Why Do Species Matter?", I came to the conclusion that if there is a valid reason for protecting endangered species that goes at all beyond the duties we might have not to harm or kill any animal of comparable type, that reason can only be grounded in an aesthetic appreciation of individuals of that species. This somewhat disappointing conclusion was reached by eliminating the alternatives, and noting that the reasons with which we were left were adequate to explain some of our puzzling intuitions about this complex issue. However, in their reviews of this article, both George Cave (E&A II/3, pp. 63-65) and Andrew Rowan (E&A II/4, pp. 92-93) take exception with this conclusion. Since their reasons for doing so seem at first to be quite different, I shall consider their objections one at a time. However, I will end by suggesting that there might be a common concern underlying both men's apparently disparate criticisms.

Dr. Rowan's objection seems to be that an aesthetic judgment is subjective, and hence untrustworthy; he would prefer to tie our moral obligations to something he refers to as "ecological aesthetics." If this phrase is meant to suggest that a creature's adaptation to its environment, its unique ecological fitness, might inspire aesthetic feelings of admiration and wonder, I would certainly agree with him, and acknowledged this facet of our aesthetic evaluation in my original article (p. 109, 111). If, on the other hand, he means that we ought to recognize that an animal has some

other sort of value which accrues to it in virtue of its occupying a certain role in the ecosystem, then his suggestion does not differ obviously from the claim I considered in my article, and rejected on the grounds that it simply does not yield the consequences that its proponents claim to generate. In particular, it does not support that conclusion that all, or even most, species can be shown to be valuable on this criterion (pp. 106-108).

Mr. Cave's objections are considerably more subtle, but I believe that they, too, can be answered. The first objection is that my proposed solution is "thoroughly speciesist" (p. 63) and the second is that my solution rests on a confusion between those features that provide psychological motivation for an action, and that that provide moral justification for it.

Underlying both these points is an issue about which Cave and I disagree: the question of whether a thing's aesthetic value has any bearing on moral judgments about actions which affect that thing. Cave explicitly rejects the idea that "beauty has moral value", claiming that this tenet is "a moral disaster" that has been used to justify such clearly immoral actions as slave labor (p. 64). Cave is correct in ascribing to me the opposite point of view; my position does, as he clearly sees, presuppose that a thing's being beautiful might be used to justify the claim that we have a moral obligation to preserve it. I acknowledge that beauty ought not to be taken as the sole ground for moral value (i.e. that other considerations might outweigh a particular obligation based solely on aesthetic value--cf. p. 111 of the original article). I grant, too, that history and imagination can provide examples in which appeals to aesthetic value are used in attempts to justify immoral activities. Neither of these considerations, however,

provides any reason for thinking that beauty, or aesthetic value more generally, should play no role in our moral deliberations. Indeed, our intuitions certainly lead us to think that they should: someone who defiles a great work of art is normally considered to have done something immoral. A full exploration of the relation between aesthetic and moral value would require a paper (at least) of its own, but I believe it is sufficient for the present purposes to note that Cave has not supplied adequate reason to warrant abandoning the intuition that aesthetic value can support some claims about moral obligations.

If, however, I am justified in appealing to aesthetic value as one possible component in our moral deliberations, then both of Cave's specific objections lose their force. As I understand the word 'speciesist', it is not speciesist to appeal to a human value--i.e., to argue that something has moral worth because it is valuable to humans--as long as it is not assumed that any human value will outweigh nonhuman concerns. Thus, if animals have a right to life, it would certainly seem speciesist to claim that it is morally permissible to ignore that right in cases where we simply found the animal ugly. I did nothing of this sort in my arguments concerning endangered species; my appeal to aesthetic value was presented as something which might supplement those moral concerns which apply to any individual animal of a given type, which might plausibly explain those concerns for endangered species which extend beyond the moral considerations governing our treatment of cows, dogs, blackbirds, and laboratory rats.

As to the second objection, it would seem that if aesthetic considerations are morally relevant, they can legitimately act both as psychological motivation and as an element in moral

justification. We might well wish to keep the distinction between motivation and justification in mind, especially if one is to deal with questions about cases in which an agent fails to recognize that something is beautiful, or cases in which mistakes in aesthetic judgments are made, but that, I take it, is not Cave's point. Rather, he seems to think that if something is a psychological motivation to act, it cannot be part of the moral justification for that act; I can see no reason to accept this premise.

Both Cave's and Rowan's objections seem as if they might be linked to a worry that our aesthetic judgments might, after all, be an unreliable guide to moral action. Cave suggests that over-concern with beauty can lead to speciesist perspectives and immoral actions. Rowan quotes Hume in order to suggest that aesthetics supplies a very limited perspective and "flimsy and subjective grounds" for our moral judgments (p. 93). All of this may be true; aesthetic judgments are notoriously hard to pin down, and we certainly have much work to do in the area of aesthetic value and its role in ethics. Nonetheless, if my original arguments are correct, it's the only game in town as far as endangered species are concerned.

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