animal cases are seen as remarkably alike in the role that experiences and experiences unfolding in a life play. What the animal case has to contend with, so far as normal adult humans are concerned, is the extent, variety, quality, and depth of experiences that are available to humans through the multiple dimensions of our lives, some of which are made available to us through the exercise of our autonomy. Nothing in all this says that human lives are more valuable than animal lives *because* they are autonomous lives; all autonomy does, *at best*, is to make ranges of experiences available to humans. Even without autonomy, animal lives are valuable, since animals remain experiential creatures, but without autonomy, human lives are not as valuable as they can be, since the full range of the experiences such lives are capable of through the additional capacities that normal adult human lives typically possess is not present.

Notes

¹ See especially my articles "The Significance of Agency and Marginal Cases," *Philosophica*, vol. 39, 1987; "Autonomy and the Value of Animal Life," *The Monist*, vol. 70, 1987; and "Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism," *Between The Species*, vol. 4, 1988.

² See especially my books *Interests and Rights: The Case Against Animals* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980) and *Rights, Killing, and Suffering* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1983).

³ Doubtless part of the explanation for this is to be traced to general interest in moral philosophy in the topic of autonomy.

⁴ See, e.g., "Vivisection, Morals and Medicine," in T. Regan, P. Singer, eds., *Animal Rights and Human Obligations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1989), pp. 223-236; "Animal Parts, Human Wholes: On the Use of Animals as a Source of Organs for Human Transplant," in J. M. Humber, R. F. Almeder, eds., *Biomedical Ethics Reviews 1987* (Clifton, NJ, Humana Press, 1988), pp. 89-101; "The Ethics of the Search for Benefits: Animal Experimentation in Medicine," in R. Gillon, ed., *The Principles of Health Care Ethics* (New York, John Wiley, 1989); "The Ethics of Using Animals for Human Benefit," in T. B. Mepham, G. A. Tucker, J. Wiseman, eds., *Issues in Agricultural Bioethics* (Nottingham, University of Nottingham Press, 1995); and "Medicine, Animal Experimentation, and The Moral Problem of Unfortunate Humans," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, vol. 13, 1996, pp. 181-210.

⁵ Carl Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research," *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 14, 1986, pp. 865-870.

Reply: The Instrumental Value of Autonomy

Bart Gruzalski

Pacific Center for Sustainable Living

The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft aglay,
An' lea'e us naught but grief an' pain,
For promised joy!"

*Robert Burns*¹

Philosophers have cited autonomy as the reason for thinking that the lives of normal adult humans are more valuable than the lives of nonhuman animals. In "Autonomy and the Orthodoxy of Human Superiority" (hereafter, "Orthodoxy"), I questioned what value autonomy adds to a life: are our lives better off because we are autonomous and therefore have the ability to pursue what we think of as the "good life"? If we take an external perspective, the answer is plausibly negative: because of our pursuits of what we think is a "good life," we have committed genocide, created nuclear weapons, caused numerous extinctions, and wrecked havoc on the earth's ecosystem. But if we take an inner perspective, it seems plausible that an ability to choose our own idea of the good life and mold our life to accommodate that idea adds positive value to that life.

This value might be added in one of two ways. It could be that our lives are inherently more valuable because of these capacities or that our lives are more valuable because of the instrumental value of these capacities. R. G. Frey holds the instrumental position, claiming that the exercise of autonomy enriches a life, causing "considerable satisfaction." In investigating

DISCUSSION

Frey's position in "Orthodoxy," I asked: Do the autonomous experience more satisfaction than those who lack autonomy? This question, critical for Frey's position, focuses only on instrumental values and clearly does not presuppose a hedonistic account. In answering this question, I argued that exercising the capacities of judging, choosing ends, and pursuing attainments diminishes the satisfactoriness of our lives.

My argument rested on three points. The first is nicely summarized in the above quote from Robert Burns: to pursue avidly what one wants and to try to mold one's life after some plan not only meets with many disappointments, but even when there is success, the loss of whatever we attain is typically inevitable. The second point is equally straightforward: pursuing ambitions and goals typically takes our attention away from what is happening in the moment, and so diminishes the satisfactoriness of the very lives we are experiencing. The third point is also verified by our own experiences: when we begin assessing how to mold our lives, contrasting how our lives are with a conception of how we think our lives should be, we become judgmental. Judgmentalness can and does diminish the satisfactoriness of what would otherwise be fully and completely satisfying.

Frey offers five responses to my argument and its conclusion. His first objection is that my argument is couched in terms that are so general that it is not easy to see that anything of significance follows. Frey's comment about generality is utterly baffling, since our discussion, including Frey's claims and criticisms, is at the same level of generality. As for Frey's claim about a lack of significance, if the points I made are accurate, they undermine his view that the exercise of autonomy leads to overall satisfaction in a life.

Frey's second point is equally baffling. He claims that my three points "amount to claims about what might happen, in the absence of any explanation, particularly any causal explanation, of why they will happen." My argument rests on much more than what "might happen." The relationship between pursuit, judgmentalness, distraction, and a diminishment of satisfaction are part of the very fabric of human life. Many of us will lose much of what we consider to be "ours"--parents, home, friends, loved ones, health--well before we die. Furthermore, what we have not lost prior to our deaths, we typically experience as losses as we die.² I am sure that Frey and I each live in the same world in which this reflection is absolutely true, and

this reflection is part of what undermines Frey's attempted defense of the "considerable satisfaction" added to human life by autonomy. There is nothing unexplained here, unless one expects an explanation at a very different level--much as the tobacco companies continue to claim that it has not been proven that smoking causes cancer because a molecular mechanism has not yet been discovered.

Frey's third response is a defense of his view against the observation that judgmentalness undermines the satisfactoriness of life. Although judgmentalness "may indeed lead me to become dissatisfied with the way I am living my life at present and so may result in my not getting out of my present way of living all that it has to offer," he tells us that "there is no necessity about this." Of course, I agree. We are not investigating causal connections that have the quality of "inevitability," "certainty," or "necessity." But a lack of necessity does not show a lack of likelihood, given human nature. The story of Tazian and Ekido walking down a muddy road illustrates the way judgmentalness undermines the satisfactoriness of everyday experiences.

Frey's fourth response is an attempt to mute the force of my claim that we are more satisfied when we live spontaneously and in the moment. He claims that

all Gruzalski's point comes to is the caution that we can become too pre-occupied with an organized life and a job or profession and so fail to capture in our lives many of the good things that life has to offer. But this caution is already widely heeded: no one is a schoolteacher or pilot twenty-four hours a day, and it is easily possible in one's other time to experience all... from good meals and the enjoyment of nature to reading....

Frey's answer to the diminishment of satisfaction through preoccupation, judgmentalness, and distraction is that we adopt a hybrid approach: a proper balance of absorption in preoccupations with periods set aside for smelling the flowers. Frey is certainly correct that a goal-directed life is more fulfilling if one puts into it moments of awareness of flowers, birdsongs, and sunsets. But if the hybrid is better than a life totally filled with pursuit and absorbed judgmentalness, then a life that excluded these satisfaction-minimizing mental activities would plausibly be even better, unless we had some reason for believing that a life of

moment-to-moment awareness would be more satisfactory if we injected into it judgmentalness, distraction, and pursuit. We have no such reason. Instead, Frey's offer of a hybrid is his way of acknowledging how pursuing and judging can undermine the satisfactoriness of a life.

This brings us to Frey's final objection:

There are neurosurgeons, librarians, athletes, and pianists; how exactly are they to live spontaneously? Does this injunction mean that these individuals must not have professions in the first place? But then how are they to live? And what kind of society... when professions and other ways of organizing our lives are put aside in favor of spontaneous living?

This question opens the way for us to become clear on two key issues: whether people can act spontaneously and what all this tells us about the comparative value of human and nonhuman animal lives.

Can a person spontaneously perform ordinary, coherent human activities? The most succinct answer to this question requires that we recall what's at issue. The relevant comparison is between how we are when we cook, or make chairs, or give lectures, and how we are when we become *cooks*, or become *carpenters*, or become *professors*. When we try to become *anything*, we likely will have standards, values and ambitions and might aim our activities and shape our lives in accord with them. And we all know exactly the difference: between just doing an activity versus trying to do it or trying to become something. The best athlete, the best surgeon, the best dancer, the best cook, the best lover, when each is doing what he or she does best, does so without employing those capacities that make us stumble and be distracted. As W. Timothy Gallwey writes of what he takes to be the ideal way a person should play tennis, it involves "the kind of spontaneous performance which occurs only when the mind is calm and seems at one with the body."³ These observations point out that by "living spontaneously" we do not mean anything exotic or beyond the experience of any of us, but are only pointing to how we can be when we are not judging, pursuing attainments, thinking about how life should be, or trying to become something.⁴

Recalling what is at issue invites us to return to our original comparison between the value of a life in which

sentient beings make choices and perform coherent sets of actions, including raising young, gathering food, and playing, versus a life in which beings mentally posit goals, judge the adequacy of what is present, and then try to pursue what is not. We humans are able to experience life in either of these ways, and these experiences provide us with a reliable perspective for a comparison between the value of the lives of the autonomous and the value of the lives of the nonautonomous. Given this perspective, we are not "imagining" what it would be like to be a mouse, an eagle, an elephant, or how much we enrich the life of a dog by playing fetch; instead, we are comparing how we are when we are self-consciously judging and pursuing, with how we are when we are acting spontaneously and attending to what is in the present. From this comparison we can extrapolate to what our lives would be like overall without self-consciousness, judgmentalness, and a pursuit mentality. The result is a comparison which is at least partly grounded in experience and is not freely floating in the less reliable realm of imagination. This comparison shows that the exercise of judgmentalness and pursuit much more plausibly lessens the overall satisfactoriness of a human life. If we then assume, with Frey, that the value of the autonomous life is a function of satisfactoriness, it follows that the lives of the autonomous are less valuable than the lives of sentient beings without autonomy.

This is a profoundly unorthodox conclusion. We are questioning a central orthodoxy: is there any justification for believing that the life of a normal adult human being, because of the exercise of autonomy, is richer, and therefore more valuable, than the life of a nonhuman animal? As a society, we live out a version of this orthodoxy: we sell mouse traps and rat poisons, eat meat, wear leather, allow hunting for sport, and kill nonhuman animals not only in research facilities but also in high school classrooms. These values are part and parcel with the values we apply in medical ethics and constitute the orthodoxy we are questioning. Frey, surprisingly, claims that "one of the strengths of my position on the value of human and animal life, I believe, is that it coheres nicely with recent discussions of the value of life in medical ethics and allied areas." But citing practices that assume the orthodoxy is only to cite what is in question, and so begs the question.

The orthodoxy is compelling. We are easily cajoled into agreement when we hear rhetoric to the effect that, by molding and shaping our lives in the pursuit

of what we think of as the good life, we enrich our lives, and this enrichment leads to considerable overall satisfaction. This rhetoric reflects the cultural bias of those who enjoy middle-class luxuries and opportunities. How does Frey's notion of "richness" apply to human beings who are poor, or who live traditional, indigenous lifestyles? Frey tells us that "we have an idea of what it is to live a rich, full life, of what it is to have a life that develops and stretches our talents in ways which indicate the full dimensions of what human life can be." But how culturally biased is this idea that "we" allegedly share? Is the life of a Sinkyone Native American living in the area of Northern California a thousand years ago as rich, according to Frey's notion of richness, as the life of an Oxford don? Would Frey say that a Sinkyone woman could stretch her talents to their full dimensions as she lived out a hunter-gatherer lifestyle that relied primarily on acorns, roots, and fish? Is the life of this woman, who knows nothing of reading or writing, who traditionally would not travel over 100 miles from her birthplace, and who lives as the Sinkyone people had lived for centuries, as rich, on Frey's account, as the life of an Oxford don? Frey provides us a partial answer to this question in his discussion of what we would make a point about when we say of a woman that she has "tasted life to the full":

We refer to the different dimensions of our being and to the woman's attempt to develop these in herself and to actualize them in the course of her daily life. And an important aspect in all this is what agency means to the woman: in the sense intended, she is not condemned to live the life that all of her ancestors have lived; she can mold and shape her life to "fit" her own conception of how she should live, thereby enabling her to add further dimensions of value for her life.⁵

Since in traditional indigenous life one lives the life of one's ancestors, the implication of Frey's quote is a devaluation of the life of women (and men by implication) in traditional indigenous communities. But Frey offers no argument in favor of this devaluation, only an unfounded (and indefensible) rhetoric to celebrate a peculiar kind of human life that enjoys sufficient wealth to provide the leisure and opportunity to lead a life of one's own choosing. However familiar and mesmerizing, the rhetoric that reflects our biases

for such a life provides no justification for claims about either its satisfactoriness or its value.

Instead, when we examine this rhetoric, we discover a straightforward argument that leads to the conclusion that exercising the capacities to judge, mold, pursue and attain diminishes the overall satisfactoriness of our lives. These arguments, I pointed out, are supported by the poetic, religious, and philosophical reflections of ancients and moderns, both East and West. Frey tries to discount this supportive material, material that speaks to our hearts as well as to our intellects, by claiming that my arguments rested on adopting one of these many frameworks. My argument does not rely on accepting any particular religious framework, historical perspective, or cultural outlook. Rather, by invoking several, I was pointing out the universality of the points I was making about pursuits, judgmentalness, and, therefore, autonomy. Unlike Frey's litany of a narrow range of orthodoxies to support a covering orthodoxy within the same tradition, my use of a variety of religious, poetic, and philosophical frameworks shows that the view for which I have argued is not merely part of one tradition, but is found East and West, among ancients and moderns. It is, I believe, true of all people at all times.

Nothing I have argued assumes the incommensurability of the values of human and nonhuman lives. Like Frey, I believe we can talk meaningfully about these comparative evaluations. Humans and nonhumans share much in common that adds value to our lives: contentedness, fear, stress, pleasures and pains, companionship, sexuality, grief, teaching offspring, and much more constitute our shared experiences. What is at stake here is the contribution of autonomy to the value of a life. In "Orthodoxy" I argued that it is plausible to think that autonomy diminishes the quality and the fullness of the lives we lead. In this response I have defended my argument that the instrumental value of the exercise of autonomy is a diminishment of the satisfactoriness of our lives, for reasons partially and beautifully summarized in the final stanza of Robert Burns' poem "To A Mouse":

Still thou are blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects dread!
An' forward, though I canna see,
I guess an' fear.⁶

To think that the capacities Frey collects under the notion of autonomy, the capacities of judging and pursuing what we think of as the good life, cause our lives to be more satisfactory and, therefore, more valuable than the lives of nonhuman animals, is an unjustifiable myth. To use this myth to discount and marginalize the lives of our brother and sister animals is a real tragedy, for them as well as for us.

Notes

¹ Robert Burns, "To A Mouse," in *The Literature of England II* ed. Anderson and Buckley (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1968), pp. 118-119.

² This is typically part of the dying experience. Of course, there are modes of dying—massive and "instantaneous"—in which this experience might not occur. But even in automobile and other "quick" threats to living, those who recover not infrequently report adequate psychological time for insights, recollections, and the experience of loss.

³ W. Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Tennis* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p. ii.

⁴ Although we know what moments like this are like, the question arises whether an entire day, week, or the rest of a life could be lived in this way. This is an interesting question but one tangential to our main issue. I have argued elsewhere for the possibility that an entire life could exhibit the spontaneity most of us only experience upon occasion. See my "The Possibility of Nonattachment," *Buddhism And The Emerging World Civilization*, ed. Ramakrishna Puligandla and David L. Miller (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), pp. 3-14. Given that the instrumental value of the exercise of autonomy is overall negative (a diminishment of the satisfactoriness of our lives), then we are either tragically flawed or caught in a tragic drama in which we are both victim and accomplice. It is ironic that it is this tragic character of our lives that Frey has claimed makes our lives more valuable than the lives of nonhuman animals.

⁵ R. G. Frey, "Moral Standing, The value of Lives, and Speciesism," *Between the Species*, 4, Summer 1988, p. 200.

⁶ Robert Burns, *op. cit.*

Concerned about:

Furs?

Zoos?

Hunting?

Trapping?

Vivisection?

Factory Farming?

Wildlife Conservation?

WE ARE TOO....

Did you know that philosophers have also made a contribution to the growth of the animal liberation movement?—Think of Clark, Magel, Regan, Rollin, Singer and Sapontzis.

Between the Species "is the only publication which allows such extensive examination of the philosophical basis for animal rights."—Brad Miller, Humane Farming Association.

Subscribe today—and please send your tax deductible contribution—help us guarantee philosophers a forum in which to continue to evolve a sound basis for animal rights.

\$12.00 from:

Between the Species
P.O. Box 8496
Landscape Station
Berkeley, CA 94707

Sample back issue \$3.00

*Semiannual
Journal of Ethics*

**PHILOSOPHICAL ACTIVISM
NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!**