



REJOINDER

Kent Baldner

RAINFOREST

Kainginero,
Don't cut the trees
For your meagre harvest
Of corn and beans
For your hungry children.

Each tree that falls
Resounds around the planet
Each red-footed, green-jewelled frog
Smashed or burned
Sounds our death knell.

Each tree that falls
Crushing airy worlds of bromeliads
Fragrance of trampled orchids
Dying bewilderment
Of sloe-eyed, three-toed sloths
Writes our epitaph.

Each tree that falls
The beating of breasts
And wailing
Of our monkey cousins
At the forest edge
Warns
Kainginero
The ark is too small
For you
Too.

Frogs, bromeliads, monkeys, kaingineros
In this game of wealth and greed and power
There's no space for you anymore
You are
The dispossessed of the Earth.

- Mary de La Valette

Let me begin by thanking Professor Sapontzis for taking the time to respond to my paper. While we disagree on important issues, we agree on the value of pursuing this discussion.

Sapontzis' first two criticisms address differences between us regarding the foundation of values. He first rejects my claim that the environment can have value apart from sentient beings, and then the claim that focusing on sentience betrays some lingering anthropocentrism. These criticisms raise important questions that I cannot adequately address in this context. Consequently, the following should be understood as constituting only a preliminary response to questions that will require much more discussion.

Sapontzis argues that "[s]entient beings are not at the center of a consistent and adequate value theory because they are more important than non-sentient beings ..., [but] because it is through their relations to sentient beings that things come to have value." But why should I accept this? This is exactly the point of contention between us, and so needs to be defended rather than simply asserted. What, after all, is so important about sentience? The assumption seems to be that the experience of pleasure (or the satisfaction of one's desires) has an intrinsic positive value, and the experience of pain (or the frustration of one's desires), an intrinsic negative value. But it is this claim that the environmentalist rejects. If we grant that both pleasure and pain can serve some



DISCUSSION