

DEONTOLOGY APPLIED

ANIMALS & INDIRECT DUTY VIEWS

some people believe that we have no duties directly to animals—that we owe nothing to them—that we can do nothing that wrongs them. Rather, we can do wrong acts that involve animals, and so we have duties regarding them, though none to them. Such views may be called indirect duty views. (Regan, 32)

ANIMAL RIGHTS

The fundamental wrong is the system that allows us to view animals as our resources, here for us—to be eaten, or surgically manipulated, or put in our cross hairs for sport or money. (Regan, 31)

THE PROBLEM WITH INDIRECT DUTY VIEWS

- Views that allow only indirect duties to animals locate moral status in the wrong place
 - We can see the problem of locating moral status by looking at marginal cases

THE PROBLEM OF MARGINAL CASES

1. Animals lack moral status, and so cannot be the direct or independent objects of moral consideration [indirect duty view]
2. Animals lack moral status because they are unable to *F* (e.g. unable to act rationally)
3. But there are cases of beings of the kind that possesses moral status (e.g. human beings) that are unable to *F* (e.g. children, mentally disabled)
4. There are no other relevant differences between these marginal cases and animals
5. Since we can't treat children or the disabled like things, we can't treat animals like things either – i.e. animals have moral status
6. \therefore We have direct duties towards animals

AGAINST UTILITARIANISM

- Utilitarianism's emphasis on aggregation fails to respect the rights of those individuals who have moral status

Here is an analogy to help make the philosophical point clearer: a cup contains different liquids—sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter, sometimes a mix of the two. What has value are the liquids: the sweeter the better, the bitter the worse. The cup—the container—has no value. It's what goes into it, not what they go into, that has value. For the utilitarian, you and I are like the cup; we have no value as individuals and thus no equal value. What has value is what goes into us, what we serve as receptacles for; our feelings of satisfaction have positive value, our feelings of frustration have negative value. (Regan, 35)

THE RIGHTS VIEW

you and I, for example, do have value as individuals—what we'll call inherent value ... My value as an individual is independent of my usefulness to you. Yours is not dependent on your usefulness to me. For either of us to treat the other in ways that fail to show respect for the other's independent value is to act immorally—is to violate the individual's rights. (Regan, 36)

HAVING RIGHTS

- What does it take to have value as an individual—to have rights?
 - Inherent value belongs equally to any who are the "experiencing subjects of a life" (Regan, 37)
 - At least some animals are such experiencing subjects, so at least some animals have rights—they cannot be used merely as means to another's ends

WARREN'S OBJECTION

(1) it [Regan's animal rights theory] rests upon the obscure concept of inherent value, which is defined only in negative terms, and (2) it seems to preclude any plausible answer to questions about the moral status of the vast majority of sentient animals

REPLIES TO WARREN

- The problem with inherent value isn't that it is mysterious, but rather that Regan hasn't provided a satisfactory explanation of *why* animals have inherent value
- The fact that our knowledge of which beings have inherent value is limited doesn't mean that we shouldn't be cautious in the manner in which we make life or death decisions regarding their treatment

