review, although his suggestion that 'taking a patient who refuses treatment off a respirator counts as passive euthanasia' might be contended.

Anyone with an interest in ethical decision-making would find great value in this book. Gert argues with clarity and precision and should be forgiven for saying so on several occasions. There are shades here, also, of the moral reflections of Hobbes, Rousseau and Hegel, whose views deserve greater prominence in practical ethics. Gert has dealt with complex issues in a manner which is likely to appeal to the intelligent lay reader. 'A book on moral philosophy understandable only by professional moral philosophers', he says, 'is a bad book on moral philosophy'.

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Morals, Reason and Animals

S F Sapontzis, 302 pages, Philadelphia, $34.95, Temple University Press, 1987

S F Sapontzis, Professor of Philosophy at California State University, describes his book as a 'second-generation contribution' to the philosophical discussion of animal rights, following on from the 'seminal writings' of animal liberation philosophers such as Peter Singer, Bernard Rollin and Tom Regan. The work focuses on what the author regards as the 'pivotal issue' in the animal liberation debate of the past 15 years or so: the moral implications of being or not being 'rational'.

The first part of the book examines the claim that 'reason' is necessary for morality, attempting to refute the argument that only 'rational' beings can be moral agents. In this context, 'rational' is used to refer to normal, adult human intelligence, so that the question is whether only normal, adult humans can be moral agents. (This question has relevance in the animal rights debate since the claim that humans but not animals can be moral agents has been used to justify human exploitation of animals.) Sapontzis takes a 'commonsensical' view of morality, arguing that there is no strict dichotomy, but a continuum between humans and animals. Animals (like retarded or senile humans, human children and other 'marginal cases') behave in ways that achieve moral goods: when such behaviour is intentional and straightforward (ie without ulterior motives) then animals, like human marginal cases, can be considered to be at least 'virtuous agents', if not fully moral agents. Subsequent sections of the book are devoted to an examination of what the author believes to be the logical consequences of this moral continuum.

The second and third parts examine the case for 'liberating' animals, that is, for putting an end to the routine sacrifice of animal interests for human benefit and extending 'moral rights' to animals. Sapontzis argues that this is what we ought (morally) to do, since liberating animals would accomplish three major moral goals: (i) developing our moral character (leading to morality becoming a 'pervasive way of life', with decisions about, for example, what to eat and wear becoming moral decisions); (ii) reducing suffering in life and making life more enjoyable and fulfilling (using 'life' to refer to all sentient beings); and (iii) making the world a 'fairer' place, by ensuring that 'goods, opportunities, punishments and rewards are distributed fairly'. Several arguments opposing animal liberation are analysed and found to be based on the premise that humans but not animals are 'rational'. Sapontzis challenges this opposition, arguing that human rationality is not the only source of morality and that animals should be brought into the 'moral community'.

The fourth part of the book then examines some of the likely consequences of our liberating animals. Extending moral rights to animals would not solve the problem of how to treat animals, but would, rather, open the question. Indeed, it is very hard to imagine a world in which animals are not 'exploited' to some extent. Sapontzis recognises this, suggesting that 'liberating animals would have the largest impact on our lives of any moral reform movement to date', but that 'exactly where liberating animals would lead us is something we can only discover as we go along'. He speculates on how such animal liberation would affect our diet (would we be obliged to become vegetarians or even vegans?), research (would there be any circumstances in which we might use animals in research?) and our attitudes towards the general environment.

The questions raised and discussed in this book are both interesting and challenging. The emphasis on the continuum between humans and other animals and the use of extrapolation from our everyday, commonsense morality makes many of the arguments persuasive. There is, however, a lack of empirical information (which the author readily admits). This leads, for example, to the assertion that the 'simple, straightforwardness of [animals'] compassionate, courageous, and other such actions is virtually never an issue' being supported mainly by stories about dogs and porpoises saving drowning humans, by the behaviour of guide-dogs and by examples of animals engaging in parental care. Some more detailed discussion of the relevant ethnological and physiological evidence would have been welcome here.

Overall, this book serves to emphasise the complexity of what we call 'morality'. 'Animal liberation' issues are set in the context of the many facets of everyday human moral practice. By using such a 'commonsensical' approach, the author has provided a helpful framework for thinking about our moral obligations towards animals.

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