

Good the debate on animal rights argumentative essay example

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



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Introduction

Recent years have seen the debate on animal rights intensify. Many have questioned whether animals possess any right and whether humans have the moral right to exploit animals any way they like. Advancements in the fields of genetics and medical research has only helped to intensify the debate on animal rights. Most of the argument for or against animal rights have based on concepts of philosophy. Three of the authors who written about this controversial issue are Peter Singer, Carl Cohen and Tom Reagan. The three have written pieces that explore these issue using different approaches. This paper aims to conduct a synthesis of the main arguments of the three authors exploring their similarity, differences, and even their points of contentions. This paper does not however aim to prove that the arguments of one are accurate than the other and neither does it intend to support any side of the debate.

Tom Reagan is philosophy professor at North Carolina State University and in his book ‘ The case of Human Rights”, he claims that all beings on earth who possess a life that has a experiential welfare inadvertently have an intrinsic value or worth that warrants them respect from fellow beings and that

provides them with a right to be treated this way; that is with respect. In simple terms, Reagan claims that all living beings that have self-identity and conscious awareness fully deserve moral rights. He calls for the complete abolition of animal research, the fur industry as well as commercial animal agriculture. According to him, these three fields do enormous injustice, and they must, therefore, be abolished immediately. However, Reagan does not explicitly state which animals fulfil these stated traits, but beings that belong to the higher species category, for example, the vertebrates, fit his criteria. Unlike Tom Reagan, who in one way or another contends that animals have rights, Carl Cohen is extremely critical of the animal rights view. Cohen's viewpoint on animal rights is almost a counterargument against Reagan's point of view. He is of the opinion that animals cannot bear any rights because the entire concept of rights is essentially rooted in humanity. In other words, rights are based on the moral world of humans and consequently, the force as well as the applicability of this concept is only in this world. Although Cohen admits that animals share some essential traits with human such as are consciousness of sensory impression and the ability to suffer, this does not however make them in any way equal to humans. According to Cohen, there is a persistent confusion among humans where rights are confused with obligations and an assumption is made that just because humans have various obligations to animals is a sign that these animals have rights. Cohen calls this "symmetrical reciprocity" and according to him, its basis is a false logic. He then goes on to distinguish between rights and obligations. Obligations are essentially what people ought to do while rights are essentially what other people can justly demand

that they are done. According to Cohen, humans act as moral agents and moral principles restrain them from inhumane treatment of animals. The basic meaning of this is that humans should not in any way inflict suffering or pain on animals. This does not however mean that man should stop doing or conducting all other activities that lead to a potential harm of animals. Cohen, for example, makes a reference to medical research conducted on animals. He states that scientists are morally obliged by to conduct tests on animals or use the in experiments if this is the best way to achieve medically related goals that will benefit humans. He goes on to suggest that the duty to humans is of an entirely different moral order that the duty towards animals such as rodents.

Cohen basic argument, therefore, is that the concept of rights is human in nature and consequently; it does not apply to animals and animals cannot, therefore, be said to have any rights.

Peter Singer is an author who has also written on the issue, and he seems to be of the same opinion as Reagan although his argument is constructed in an entirely new manner. His argument is based on a utilitarian logic and regarding human rights, he states that the suffering that animals endure in the farm during the process of slaughtering outweighs by far the nutrition and pleasure that the flesh from these animal give to man. He extends this discussion to laboratory animals where he argues that the pain that they endure outweighs by far their usefulness as test subjects. According to Singer, these practices have severe moral consequences and because of this, they deserve to be abolished. However, Singer false short of explicitly calling for animal rights. He does not explicitly state that animals have rights

but from his argument, there is an indirect message that he is a full supporter for animal rights.

Although Singer's argument is somehow similar to Regan's, there are significant differences between the two. For example, while Singer's argument is utilitarian in nature, Regan's is not. While Singer's argument almost implies that animals have the same rights that humans have, Regan argues animals only have moral rights to particular privileges and freedoms. A point of consensus that can be established between the two arguments is that animals have in the minimum sense the right to life as well as the right from harmful and painful body interference. The standout author is however Cohen who passionately argues against the provision of any rights to animals.

Conclusion

The debate on animal rights is likely to continue for a long time, and there is bound to be even more varied opinion on the issue. As shown, Singer, Cohen and Regan share different views on this subject. There is however an overlap in the point of view of Singer and Regan, who in one way or another support animal rights although in Singer's case, he does not explicitly come out to state that animals have rights. Cohen is the odd one out as he does not in any way support animals rights. According to him, rights are entirely human in nature and according them to animals would be a misuse of the term. While Singer and Regan are in full opposition of processes such as medical research that does great harm to animals and also brings them huge suffering, Cohen is in full support of such activities which he deems as

necessary in pursuit of goals that are meant to improve the lives of humans. From this, it appears that the debate on animal rights is far from over.

References

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