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Essay 2

Carl Cohen is a prominent professor of Philosophy and has published numerous essays based on moral and political philosophy. In his publication ‘Do animals have rights?’, he has argued that animals do not have rights (Cohen). He claims this on the basis that Rights are given to those who can present moral claims against the other. He declines the argument which suggests that the practice of experimentation on the animal must be abolished. Moreover, he has is of the view that testing and experimentation must continue for the sake of advancement in technology. This must be done so that humans can find better and secure ways to save human life.

Cohen is of the view that animals do not possess the moral capacity and that is it is unique to humans only (Cohen). The moral capacity is the ability and freedom to form, analyze and judge the morals and values. The humans are civilized and can evaluate the behaviors, on the other hand, animals are unable to base their acts according to moral capacity. Animals cannot judge their actions and punish or form laws. Laws and regulations are made by humans only and only they can understand the necessity to follow it. It may be true that animals do not have a conscious like humans but they do follow nature’s law. For example, a lion does not harm or kill any animal unless it feels hungry or needs to protect itself. It is seen that animals like cats nurse the other species like puppies out of affection. Moreover, a mental challenge person does not act morally as any other healthy human do, yet the mentally challenged person is not excluded from the community. That person is also not considered equal as animals just because it lacks the quality which differentiates humans and animals.

According to Cohen, the human should continue to experiment on animals since it will reduce the number of fatalities and improve life quality (Cohen). This shows that humans are superior species and their rights can suppress the rights of other species. However, it is very important to understand that animals play a significant role in sustaining the environment. They are part of the ecosystem, and their absence or decrease in number will hugely affect human life. They play their part in the maintenance of the natural environment of Earth. They predate upon plants and other animals due to which the population of other species is controlled. They pollinate several plants that enhance the vegetation. Without them, the balance of the ecosystem will be endangered.

It is also stated that humans have moral obligation therefore they have rights, but the animals have neither. As human is the most advanced species of the Earth, it has to duties to perform and obligations to fulfill. Humans have to work, fulfill other human rights and accomplish meaningful tasks, whereas, the animals do not perform these tasks. Indeed, animals do not live an intricate life but if one looks at a mother sparrow, looking for food so that she can feed her children, one would understand that animals do feel responsible for their duties just like humans. In addition to this, it is noteworthy that the laws are developed by humans yet the animals follow nature’s law. They reproduce, protect and feed children and build houses, and clean themselves, etc.

Cohen argues that animals do not possess rights because they cannot claim or defend them. He says so on the basis of his definition of rights that a right is a claim or probable claim one can make against another. So, he believes is that rights belong to only those who can claim an defend their rights and, in this way, only humans deserve to have the rights. However, it is evident that animals also show reflexes and respond to a human’s action. Animals do not claim their rights but do understand that they should not be bothered without a reason. They do not have a well-developed brain as of humans but they can sense and respond to the environment just like humans. Cohen suggests that animals do not have rights as they are not self-governing or morally autonomous like humans.

Thus, Cohen interprets that if the animals do not have the rights, a human cannot possibly violate which does not exist. As they cannot resist the actions of humans or defend themselves, it shows that they do not claim right. Without them being able to claim right, there is not significance concerning their rights. Nevertheless, every living being possesses the right to live and live in a secure environment. A dog, for example, suffering from pain should not be considered less than any human suffering from pain. Animal brains may not be as advanced but they feel pain and show emotions.

The requirement of animal testing is understood that humans cannot be directly given a treatment but testing is needed first. However, it is observed that animal testing is not even successful to be worth the suffering of an animal. In the case of many diseases, the experimentation on animals is of no use because the animals do not suffer from those diseases. Hence, it can be concluded that even if the experimentation is unavoidable, the conditions and consequences must be critically analyzed before. Any action which will put the animals in extreme danger or pain must be avoided. With advanced technology, new methods should be developed for scientific testing to minimize the practice of animal experimentation.

Works Cited

Cohen, Carl. “Do Animals Have Rights?” *Ethics & Behavior*, vol. 7, no. 2, June 1997, pp. 91–102. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, doi:10.1207/s15327019eb0702\_1.