

Preface

FOR THE PAST decade, I have been concerned in my teaching, lecturing, and writing with raising questions about the morality of animal use in the sciences and attempting to effect significant change in this area. Unlike most philosophers, I enjoy the opportunity of working directly with scientists in many fields on a daily basis, and engaging them in extended dialogue on a wide array of moral and conceptual topics. During most of this time, my activities have been predicated on the assumption that what is most needed in this area is an ideal theory concerning the moral status of animals, which could be used to provide a criterion for assessing current practice and as a guide to change. After all, as Aristotle pointed out long ago, just as archers can sharpen their skill only if they have a target to aim at, so too, we need a measure by which to guide our moral activities in any given area.

Until very recently, Western society in general and philosophers in particular have neglected to develop such an ideal ethic for the treatment of animals; indeed, more has been written on this question during the past ten years than in the previous three thousand. In approaching this issue, I have taken the tack that such a theory might best be constructed by following through the logical implications of the ethical theory about humans implicit in our social practice and our laws, as rationally extended to animals.¹ Further, I have become convinced on the basis of my own activities that one could elicit acquiescence from scientists to such a theory through rational dialogue, which would help them lay bare their own moral assumptions and what follows from these, something typically unrecognized by most of us, scientists and non-scientists alike, even including philosophers. Thus I have seen my task as Socratic; in Plato's judicious metaphor, as helping people recollect and appropriate

in conscious fashion what they already carry within them. In my own, much cruder metaphor, I see the battle as one which could be won only by means of a form of intellectual judo—using opponents' own force to move them—rather than by intellectual sumo—attempting to muscle their ideas out of the arena and overpower them with mine. I believe that such a Socratic strategy is the correct one for a moral philosopher; Plato was right in his view that we cannot teach, but only remind.

While I have found this strategy quite successful, I failed to realize initially the extent to which what I call in this book the ideology, or common sense, of science overrides what to non-scientists is ordinary common sense. I soon learned that I could expect the same sorts of initial responses from scientists of all varieties the world over to my raising of ethical questions: "Science is value-free." "Ethical questions are outside the purview of science proper." And, most astonishingly, the claim that one cannot know "scientifically" that what we do to animals matters to them. In short, built into the common sense of science is the idea that we cannot know that animals experience pain, fear, suffering, distress, anxiety, and all the other subjective states of consciousness which are so essential to our moral concern for and deliberations about our moral obligations to other people. Increasingly, I found myself in the position of being forced to "prove" that animals were conscious, and to provide good, "scientifically acceptable" grounds even for claiming that animals feel pain. Thus, it became clear to me that an integral part of becoming a scientist is learning to abandon ordinary common sense in a number of areas, including that of ascribing mentation and subjective experience to animals. Even more surprisingly, I found that very often such a stance was donned along with a laboratory coat, and that in their nonscientific garb, most scientists used the same mentalistic locutions in talking about animals as the rest of us. Thus, my attention gradually turned to trying to confute this morally pernicious, ideologically based skepticism about animal subjective experience.

The issue of animal consciousness, particularly subjective states like pain which are directly relevant to moral thinking about animals, forms the main subject of this book. I hope to show that denial of subjective states in animals is not an essential feature of a scientific stance, but rather a contingent, historical aberration which can be changed—and indeed must be changed—to make science both coherent and morally responsible.

My hope is that this book will help scientists break the ideological bonds which keep them from ascribing subjective mental states to animals. Additionally, I hope that it will help non-scientists with an interest in the moral

status of animals to persevere in their attempt to penetrate the fortress of scientific ideology and practice, and effect change therein. Such changes are already taking place, and it is socially, morally, and scientifically necessary that they proceed rationally, rather than haphazardly.

As in my previous book, I make extensive use of anecdote in the course of developing my argument, in part, for the sake of readability, and in part, and more important, because, like Hegel, I am a believer in the existence and value of the concrete universal—that is, particular cases which vividly instantiate and communicate a general truth. So, as one reader of the manuscript remarked, it is no wonder that I am so sympathetic to George Romanes's anecdotal method.

I am grateful to the hundreds of scientists in a variety of disciplines who have treated me as a colleague and helped me to understand their thinking on many of the issues discussed in this book. Though I have encountered isolated pockets of hostility and occasionally what can only be termed "dementia" as a reaction to my ideas and activities, the vast majority of scientists have been unusually generous in giving me a hearing and an education and have been extraordinarily open to new ideas. I trust that they will take this book in the spirit in which it was written—not as "anti-science," but as a constructive critique of questionable philosophical assumptions which underlie much current scientific activity, whose abandonment can only enhance the intellectual and moral validity of scientific efforts to understand the world.

In particular, I should like to thank my scientific colleagues at Colorado State University, whose responsiveness to my ideas has helped make the institution an acknowledged world leader in moral regard for research animals,² and who have allowed and encouraged me to teach courses under the aegis of biology, physiology, veterinary medicine, and animal science. I must especially acknowledge Dr. Lynne Kesel, laboratory animal veterinarian, with whom I work every day; Dr. David Robertshaw, physiologist; Dr. Murray Nabors, botanist; Dr. Phil Lehner, ethologist; Dr. Wayne Viney, psychologist; and the following veterinary scientists and surgeons: Drs. James Voss, Harry Gorman, and Dennis McCurnin. Thanks go, too, to Dr. Roy Henrickson of Berkeley, who first forced me to examine the issue of animal pain, and Dr. Andrew Rowan of Tufts University, who has helped catalyze my thinking.

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