

These 3 Reflections would earn 4.5 out of 6 points
Please click on the boxes to see strengths and areas for improvement

Sample 1
Score:
4.5/6

With the weather starting to cool down once again, my family asked me to turn on our fireplace for some warmth as we gathered around in the living room. Upon igniting the fire, I noticed a small white-colored spider running across the fireplace, barely avoiding the intense flames. Upon seeing this, I instinctively thought of Peter Singer's work, "Practical Ethics." Drawing heavily on Bentham's views on animal ethics, Singer argues that full moral consideration should be extended towards beings on the basis of their sentience, or their capacity to suffer or experience enjoyment or happiness. With my hands hovering over the flames, trying to absorb as much heat as I possibly could, I watched this spider run across the fireplace from one end to the other and could only imagine the uncomfortable amount of heat that it must be absorbing especially now that I was already starting to feel warm. This small spider, an insect that many may disregard or not even consider, was a living being and just like us humans; it knew to instinctively run away from fire to avoid getting too hot. Of its own free will, this spider was doing its best to avoid the pain of being burned alive by an intrusion that my family implemented for our own enjoyment. This moment reinforced the idea that, just like us, this spider had desires and interests. Interests which, Singer suggests, we should work to accommodate and meet with full moral and ethical consideration. With the help of my dad, we quickly caught the spider in a napkin and gently released it outside, allowing it to experience life and fulfill its pleasure for a little while longer.

By utilizing the experience of pain or suffering as a metric for whether a being should be granted equal moral consideration, how does this consideration extend to those who lack or have lost the ability to express pain, such as patients in persistent vegetative states?

This week's readings have made me think a lot about how we treat animals as lesser beings, but view our pets as family and our equals. Since I've been home I've been able to spend a lot more time with my dog, who I've had since I was 9 years old. He is a big part of our family and would never view him as food but yet I still eat meat weekly. Tom Regan's text, "The Case for Animal Rights", speaks about the subject-of-a-life criterion and all beings having equal inherent value. For some reason I view my dog as a being who deserves a higher priority over other beings however he is an animal just the same as the ones eaten. I would never wish to see him killed for food or tested on. If I had to choose between a dog and a mouse I would surely say the mouse due to my love for dogs and my close companionship with my own. The article by Matthew Calarco, "Identity, Difference, and Indistinction", made me consider if it was possibly because of logocentrism, me viewing my dog as a higher being because his behavior more closely resembles my own, or perhaps because he as a dog is more beneficial to me by exhibiting behavior and personality that I find more enjoyable.

While I am against all animal testing, I have to question why is it that I am more okay with mice being tested than rabbits, and rabbits more so than dogs or cats. I found it interesting that the article produced by PETA made claims such as the research facilities not receiving many inspections, while the website for the group "Americans for Medicinal Progress (AMP)" claim that they even administer extra inspections. More interestingly, PETA had many statistics to back up their claims of unethical abuse while the AMP had broad claims with no statistical data to back it up. The AMA argues that they are as humane as possible to animals, however fail to mention that there are little regulations for some animals such as mice and rabbits. They also fail to mention that while cruelty free labels do not always mean cruelty free, there are companies such as Leaping Bunny that certify brands who have no animal testing within their process whatsoever.

The article in ScienceMag, "'It's heartbreaking.' Labs are euthanizing thousands of mice in response to coronavirus pandemic" by David Grimm, showcases what is closer to the reality of animal testing. I had a roommate this year who is a pharmaceutical major doing postdoc testing on mice. She was the one who had to snap the necks of mice they could no longer use. This was done more often than I expected, and she spoke of how she had to pet them and gain their trust before she snapped their necks. They are testing an important medication, though I forget which, however I wonder if the deaths of so many mice is necessary. The mass killing of the mice makes me recall the logocentrism and anthropocentrism mentioned in Matthew Calarco's work. I wonder why humans tend to see themselves as such important beings and wonder if this simply stems from culture, religion, or our ability to reason.

Experiential Reflection Topic Week 2

This week I caught myself observing the birds outside my kitchen window and as I sat down to write this reflection, realized this experience held weight on me and can be related to the Matthew Calarco reading. To begin, I will summarize my experience and then connect it to Calarco's, "Identity, Difference, and Indistinction".

I was sitting down for breakfast and I glanced outside at my hanging bird feeder to see if any birds were there since it was pouring rain. To my surprise, I noticed one tiny bird nested in the upper region of the bird feeder, taking cover under its cap which extends out past the rest of the feeder. I felt sympathy for that bird and had so many questions in my head such as, how long will he/she have to take cover here? How does he/she prepare for this weather each season? With the human population cutting down lots of trees every year, what will happen when there aren't enough trees for each bird to take cover, or even live? Is that what happened to this bird? All of these questions, and sympathy I felt for this bird relate to Calarco's identity-based approaches to the morals relating to animals. Identity-based approaches seek to establish a similar moral identity between humans and animals through Darwinian ontology and normative impartiality. Darwinian ontology sets the stage and introduces the biological fact that fundamentally, humans and animals are greatly related to one another. Normative impartiality takes that empirical data and brings it into the normative realm; rational agents should extend moral consideration to all beings who have interests. In this experience I had between myself and the bird, I felt compassion for the bird as I would see a human taking cover in the rain with no apparent place to go, or to live. The way we cut down trees at such a large scale each year is for our own benefits and ends to produce paper and even wood to build our own homes. However, in building our homes, we are reducing the homes of our fellow animal neighbors and shame is rarely in question about such action. This seems to fit into the point Calarco mentions about how identity-based approaches are attacked; there are limits due to the prointellectual, antipractical biases. Perhaps the discourse of internal and fundamental rights of animals that identity-based approaches creates is too far to directly touch on the political and social struggles of the animal species. Could this be the reason Calarco is suggesting to the limits of identity-based approaches?