

15 February 2019-Dr. Mosser's Blog

"On Listening and . . . Hearing"

Years ago, in my Navarro College (Midlothian campus) philosophy class we read Tom Regan's essay entitled: "The Case for Animal Rights." Of course, animal rights in Ellis County generally gets little affirmative press—one of my students even commented that until we read this essay, she did not even know that animals had any rights. Certainly, for mainstream Texans, many of whom believe that eating meat is a God-given right, this essay was something of a distasteful annoyance. So, we debated the issue in class—which every semester seems to get people juices going. To get a flavor for Regan's essay which we read I offer an excerpt.

When it comes to the case for animal rights, then, what we need to know is whether the animals that, in our culture, are routinely eaten, hunted, and used in our laboratories, for example, are like us in being subjects of a life. And we do know this. We do know that many -- literally, billions and billions -- of these animals are the subjects of a life in the sense explained and so have inherent value if we do. And since, in order to arrive at the best theory of our duties to one another, we must recognize our equal inherent value as individuals, reason -- not sentiment, not emotion -- reason compels us to recognize the equal inherent value of these animals and, with this, their equal right to be treated with respect ("THE CASE FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS," by Tom Regan: From: *ANIMAL RIGHTS AND HUMAN OBLIGATIONS* [Edited by Tom Regan and Peter Singer. Second edition—Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1989], ISBN # 0-13-036864-4).

All of this is to say for many students Regan's claim consisted of unthought-of concepts until our class discussion. What was amazing was how the students talked past one another. In other words, they made arguments from their particularly strongly held point of view while at the same time blatantly not listening to the other people's positions. And as class wore on the louder the voices in the room got. More volume, less logic.

One of the things I suggested was that our first duty as potential philosophers and thinkers was simply to know what we were talking about. It takes a mature mind to acknowledge another's perspective, respect it on its face, and yet try to logically and cogently refute it. Unfortunately, most of our discussion of issues in the public square today is more noisy than rational. Does anyone really listen anymore?

**Come, Worship
Stay, Learn
Go, Serve**