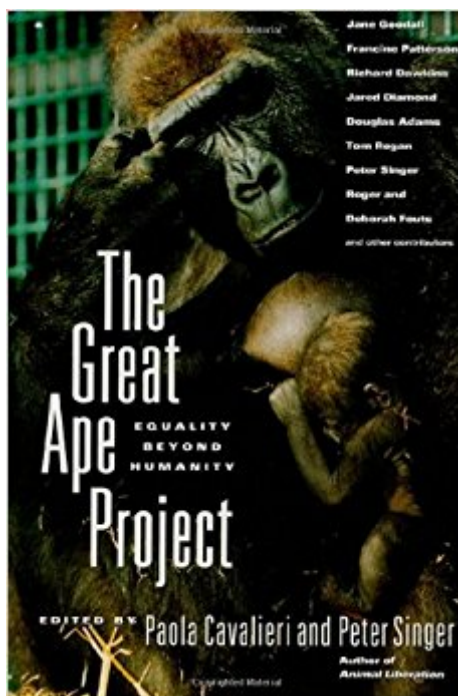


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The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity



Synopsis

A compelling and revolutionary work that calls for the immediate extension of our human rights to the great apes. The Great Ape Project looks forward to a new stage in the development of the community of equals, whereby the great apes—chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans—will actually receive many of the same protections and rights that are already accorded to humans. This profound collection of thirty-one essays by the world's most distinguished observers of free-living apes make up a uniquely satisfying whole, blending observation and interpretation in a highly persuasive case for a complete reassessment of the moral status of our closest kin.

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Customer Reviews

The publication of this volume kicks off the Great Ape Project, a worldwide effort to extend the rights commonly afforded humans to chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans. Proponents of the project would accord the rights to life, protection of individual liberty and prohibition of torture to all of these creatures. Singer (Animal Liberation) and freelance writer Cavalieri present 30 essays that make a persuasive case for equal rights. Contributors include field biologists, psychologists, lawyers, philosophers and anthropologists. Bernard Rollins, who teaches at Colorado State, where he developed the first college course in veterinary ethics and animal rights, suggests that the first step is to prohibit the importing of apes for zoos, entertainment or research. Other contributors are Jane Goodall, Roger and Deborah Fouts and Harlan Miller. As presented here, this revolutionary and controversial idea merits consideration. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text

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Proclaiming "the extension of the community of equals" of human beings to include chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans, this book presents "A Declaration on Great Apes," demanding the right to life, the protection of individual liberty, and the prohibition of torture. Thirty scientists, philosophers, and others contribute essays supporting this position. The most interesting essays explore the behavioral, genetic, and evolutionary links among the great apes, including humans, even expressing a view of man as "the third chimpanzee." The ethical articles are more abstract and redundant; this reviewer wanted less philosophy and more information on the practical ramifications of extending moral and legal equality to great apes. A heart-rending account of chimps in roadside zoos made me impatient with the overall theoretical tone. For academic and larger public library collections.- Beth Clewis, Prince William P.L., Va. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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The Great Ape Project This book is a collection of articles by numerous authors discussing facets of the proposal to grant personhood rights to the great apes. The articles had been edited by Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer. The articles have been grouped under various subtopics, namely: encounters with free living apes, conversations with apes, similarity and difference, ethics, apes as persons, and reality. All of the contributing authors argued in favor of the idea that apes should have personhood. Now I have to tell you that I debated with myself about even starting this book because the theme seemed unrealistic to me. The opposition to this idea by social conservatives and vested commercial interests would be enormous. Even if such laws were enacted, enforcement would be difficult. Yet, the topic of man's closest living relatives was important enough to me to persevere through the articles in this book. As one reads through the various articles, one learns that we humans are very close relatives to the great apes and to the chimpanzee in particular. One author even made a strong case that humans are merely a third species of chimpanzees. All three of the great ape species, namely: gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans, can learn sign language and communicate with humans in a simplistic manner. Those educated apes are even able to express their feelings. All the while that I am reading these articles, I am wondering what is the central problem that these authors are trying to solve? One obvious problem is the misery caused by medical experimentation with apes. One of the articles elaborated on the problem where healthy chimpanzees were operated on or were intentionally given a disease, which made the animal miserable and needlessly handicapped. Animal rights organizations attempted to enact legislation to

protect such laboratory animals, but were undermined by the beneficiaries of animal experimentation. These social animals are confined to cages and isolated from their roommates. Several authors also commented on problems with apes becoming zoo animals. My first impression was that zoos make it possible for young people to see these animals close up and why would anyone want to change that. However, I learned from this book that typically 10 apes are killed in order to get one ape to a zoo. The high price offered for these animals worldwide becomes an incentive for butchery in the African homeland for these apes. Moreover, many zoos treat the animals horribly and cause them to become depressed and even go insane. Even before starting this book, I had become aware from other reading that the great apes are headed for extinction. Human beings have relentlessly reduced the apes natural habitat and hunted and abused these poor animals in a shameless manner. Even without the human onslaught, apes were headed for extinction because their reproduction rate is inadequate to sustain them. Some of the authors wanted to return captured apes back into the wild. In my opinion, that would not begin to solve the problem because there really is no safe place for them to exist. After finishing the book, I still believed that none of the contributors was addressing this basic extinction problem. Do I recommend that you read this book? For most people, I would give a qualified yes to that question. I personally have a dislike for books that have been contributed to by numerous different authors. Some of the articles were extremely valuable to me. Others were so dull or poorly written that I skimmed through them as fast as I could. There is a lot of repetition in an anthology dedicated to a single theme. Being aware of these qualifications, you can decide for yourself whether the topic is important enough to you to extract the gems, which do exist within this book. Ralph D Hermansen, November 10, 2012

This book is an excellent source of information provided by a variety of scientific and legal experts. The authors show us the rich emotional and cultural lives of non-human great apes. Researchers who use other apes because of their genetic and psychological complexity ought to be required to read this book. Indeed, the one flaw of this book is the fact that a few chapters are the works of researchers who have used, for example, the linguistic talents of other apes to advance their own careers. Other sections of the book, including a chapter vividly comparing the non-human and human slave trade, and a description of the case for legal rights based on the personhood of hominids, underscore that flaw with haunting and brilliant sensitivity. Overall, The Great Ape Project lucidly demonstrates the unconscionability of continuing to use the other apes for experimentation, for teaching, for trade in their body parts, and in the entertainment industry. Moreover, it inspires us

to broaden our definition of slavery to include our nearest living relatives.

I have to admit, our family's copy of the Great Ape Project sat on the shelf for a few years before I got around to looking at it. I had deep reservations about the book, fearing that it would lead to a reinforcement of anthropocentric criteria for moral standing. However, once I started reading I was hooked. The huge number of contributors with many different viewpoints ranging from rather anthropocentric to radical animal rights make for a lively read. In addition, the book is chockablock full of fascinating information about the great apes--they really are more similar to us than even I, an animal rightist for years, would have thought possible. A challenging book that raises the questions: what does it mean to be human? And how can we justify treating our fellow great apes the way we do?

The contributors make a compelling case for sentience rights for higher primates based on strong empirical evidence and demonstrable harm caused to other higher primates that infringes on their rights claims as sentient beings. I would ask if the authors might consider a similar work that expands the case for cetacean rights on the same basis, though.

The essays in this book are remarkable and well done. A very important work for the animal rights movement. I did find it a little repetitive at times, but this did not detract from the point of the book, to make us aware of how closely related great apes really are to us, and their capacity to communicate in a human language.

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