

animal rights

“Animal Liberation” may sound more like a parody of other liberation movements than a serious objective. The idea of “The Rights of Animals” actually was once used to parody the case for women’s rights. When Mary Wollstonecraft, a forerunner of today’s feminists, published her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, her views were widely regarded as absurd, and before long an anonymous publication appeared entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*. The author of this satirical work (now known to have been Thomas Taylor, a distinguished Cambridge philosopher) tried to refute Mary Wollstonecraft’s arguments by showing that they could be carried one stage further. If the argument for equality was sound when applied to women, why should it not be applied to dogs, cats, and horses? The reasoning seemed to hold for these “brutes” too; yet to hold that brutes had rights was manifestly absurd. Therefore the reasoning by which this conclusion had been reached must be unsound, and if unsound when applied to brutes, it must also be unsound when applied to women, since the very same arguments had been used in each case.

In order to explain the basis of the case for the equality of animals, it will be helpful to start with an examination of the case for the equality of women.

why supporters of human liberation should support animal liberation, too

Excerpt from *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer

Let us assume that we wish to defend the case for women’s rights against the attack by Thomas Taylor. How should we reply?

One way in which we might reply is by saying that the case for equality between men and women cannot validly be extended to nonhuman animals. Women have a right to vote, for instance, because they are just as capable of making rational decisions about the future as men are; dogs, on the other hand, are incapable of understanding the significance of voting, so they cannot have the right to vote. There are many other obvious ways in which men and women resemble each other closely, while humans and animals differ greatly. So, it might be said, men and women are similar beings and should have similar rights, while humans and nonhumans are different and should not have equal rights.

The reasoning behind this reply to Taylor’s analogy is correct up to a point, but it does not go far enough. There are obviously important differences between humans and other animals, and these differences must give rise to some differences in the rights that each have. Recognizing this evident fact, however, is no barrier to the case for extending the basic principle of equality to nonhuman animals. The differences that exist between men and women are equally undeniable, and the supporters of Women’s Liberation are aware that these differences may give rise to different rights. Many feminists hold that women have the right to an abortion on request. It does not follow that since these same feminists are campaigning for equality between men and women they must support the right of men to have abortions too. Since a man cannot have an abortion, it is meaningless to talk of his right to have one. Since a dog can’t vote, it is meaningless to talk of a dog’s right to vote. There is no reason why either Women’s Liberation or Animal Liberation should get involved in such nonsense. The extension of the basic principle of equality from one group to another does not imply that we must treat both groups in exactly the same way, or grant exactly the same rights to both groups. Whether we should do so will





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about meat

- In the U.S., 3 million animals are killed per hour for food.
- Factory-farmed animals can do almost nothing that is natural to them—they are never able to feel the grass beneath their feet or the sun on their faces.
- Almost all of the pork, bacon, and ham consumed in the U.S. comes from 100 million pigs who live in stacked crates or barren cement stalls.
- Chickens have their beaks sliced off with a hot blade, pigs have their tails chopped off and their teeth pulled with pliers, and bulls and pigs are castrated—all without anesthetics. Animals are fed a steady diet of hormones and antibiotics so that they grow too quickly: Their hearts and limbs often cannot keep up, causing lameness and heart attacks.
- At the slaughterhouse, animals are hung upside-down and bled to death, sometimes while fully conscious.
- The American Dietetic Association, based on a review of all the scientific evidence, says that vegetarians have lower rates of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and various other ailments. Vegetarians are also about 1/10th as likely to be obese as meat-eaters.

For more information, video documentation, or vegetarian recipes or to order a free DVD, please visit GoVeg.com.

depend on the nature of members of the two groups. The basic principle of equality does not require equal or identical *treatment*; it requires equal consideration. Equal consideration for different beings may lead to different treatment and different rights.

So there is a different way of replying to Taylor's attempt to parody the case for women's rights, a way that does not deny the obvious differences between human beings and nonhuman but goes more deeply into the question of equality and concludes by finding nothing absurd in the idea that the basic principle of equality applies to so-called brutes. At this point such a conclusion may appear odd; but if we examine more deeply the basis on which our opposition to discrimination on grounds of race or sex ultimately rests, we will see that we would be on shaky ground if we were to demand equality for blacks, women, and other groups of oppressed humans while denying equal consideration to nonhumans. To make this clear we need to see, first, exactly why racism and sexism are wrong. When we say that all human beings, whatever their race, creed, or sex, are equal, what is it that we are asserting? Those who wish to defend hierarchical, inegalitarian societies have often pointed out that by whatever test we choose it simply is not true that all humans are equal. Like it or not we must face the fact that humans come in different shapes and sizes; they come with different moral

“Our task must be to ... [widen] our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.” Albert Einstein

capacities, different intellectual abilities, different amounts of benevolent feeling and sensitivity to the needs of others, different abilities to communicate effectively, and different capacities to experience pleasure and pain. In short, if the demand for equality were based on the actual equality of all human beings, we would have to stop demanding equality.

Still, one might cling to the view that the demand for equality among human beings is based on the actual equality of the different races and sexes. Although it may be said, humans differ as individuals, there are no differences between the races and sexes as such. From the mere fact that a person is black or a woman we cannot infer anything about that person's intellectual or moral capacities. This, it may be said, is why racism and sexism

are wrong. The white racist claims that whites are superior to blacks, but this is false; although there are differences among individuals, some blacks are superior to some whites in all of the capacities and abilities that could conceivably be relevant. The opponent of sexism would say the same: a person's sex is no guide to his or her abilities, and this is why it is unjustifiable to discriminate on the basis of sex.

The existence of individual variations that cut across the lines of race or sex, however, provides us with no defense at all against a more sophisticated opponent of equality, one who proposes that, say, the interests of all those with IQ scores below 100 be given less consideration than the interests of those with ratings over 100. Perhaps those scoring below the mark

would, in this society, be made the slaves of those scoring higher. Would a hierarchical society of this sort really be so much better than one based on race or sex? I think not. But if we tie the moral principle of equality to the factual equality of the different races or sexes, taken as a whole, our opposition to racism and sexism does not provide us with any basis for objecting to this kind of inequality.

There is a second important reason why we ought not to base our opposition to racism and sexism on any kind of factual equality, even the limited kind that asserts that variations in capacities and abilities are spread

evenly among the different races and between the sexes: we can have no absolute guarantee that these capacities and abilities really are distributed evenly, without regard to race or sex, among human beings. So far as actual abilities are concerned there do seem to be certain measurable differences both among races and between sexes. These differences do not, of course, appear in every case, but only when averages are taken. More important still, we do not yet know how many of these differences are really due to the different genetic endowments of the different races and sexes, and how

many are due to poor schools, poor housing, and other factors that are the result of past and continuing discrimination. Perhaps all of the important differences will eventually prove to be environmental rather than genetic. Anyone opposed to racism and sexism will certainly hope that this will be so, for it will make the task of ending discrimination a lot easier; nevertheless, it would be dangerous to rest the case against racism and sexism on the belief that all significant differences are environmental in origin. The opponent of, say, racism who takes this line will be unable to avoid conceding that if differences in ability

did after all prove to have some genetic connection with race, racism would in some way be defensible.

Fortunately there is no need to pin the case for equality to one particular outcome of a scientific investigation. The appropriate response to those who claim to have found evidence of genetically based differences in ability among the races or between the sexes is not to stick to the belief that the genetic explanation must be wrong, whatever evidence to the contrary may turn up; instead we should make it quite clear that the claim to equality does not depend on intelligence, moral capacity, physical strength, or similar

“The fact that man knows right from wrong proves his intellectual superiority to other creatures; but the fact that he can do wrong proves his moral inferiority to any creature that cannot.”

Mark Twain

Eternal Treblinka

[A]rtist Judy Chicago writes in *Holocaust Project: From Darkness to Light* about how she came to realize that the designation of Jews as animals was what led to their being treated—and slaughtered—like animals ...

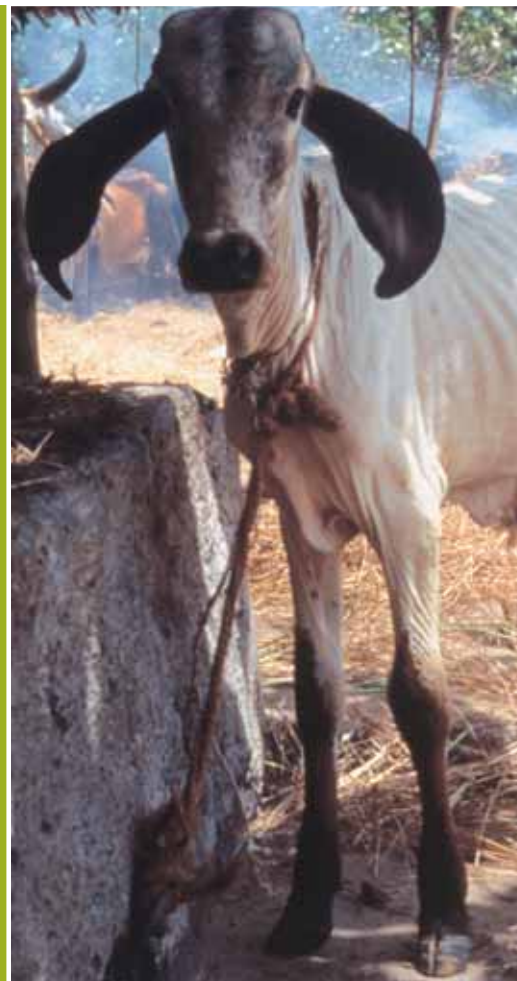
When she visited Auschwitz and saw a scale model of one of the four crematoria, she realized that “they were actually giant processing plants—except that instead of processing pigs they processed people who had been defined as pigs.”

... Chicago learned that since one of the essential steps to being able to slaughter human beings is to dehumanize them, ghettoization, starvation, filth, and brutality all helped to turn Jews into “subhumans.” By

constantly describing Jews as “vermin” and “pigs,” the Nazi regime convinced the German public that it was necessary to destroy them.

At Auschwitz ... she “suddenly thought of the ‘processing’ of other living creatures, to which most of us are accustomed and think little about . . . I began to wonder about the ethical distinction between processing pigs and doing the same thing to people defined as pigs. Many would argue that moral considerations do not have to be extended to animals, but this is just what the Nazis said about the Jews.”

What was so unnerving about being at Auschwitz, she writes, “was how oddly familiar it seemed.” Since some of the things that the Nazis did in



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the camps are done all the time in the rest of the world ... “Many living creatures are crowded together in despicable quarters; transported without food or water; herded into slaughterhouses, their body parts ‘efficiently’ used to make sausages, shoes, or fertilizer.” That is when something inside her suddenly went “click.”

“I saw the whole globe symbolized at Auschwitz, and it was covered with blood: people being manipulated and used; animals being tortured in useless experiments; men hunting helpless vulnerable creatures for the ‘thrill’; human beings ground down by inadequate housing and medical care and by not having enough to eat; men abusing women and children; people

polluting the earth ... the oppression of those who look, feel or act differently, ...”

During the twentieth century two of the world’s modern industrialized nations—the United States and Germany—slaughtered millions of human beings and billions of other beings. Each country made its own unique contribution to the century’s carnage: America gave the modern world the slaughterhouse; Nazi Germany gave it the gas chamber . . .

At killing centers speed and efficiency are essential to the success of the operation. Just the right mix of deception, intimidation, physical force, and speed is needed to minimize the chance of panic or resistance that will disrupt the process. At the Belzec death

camp in Poland everything proceeded “at top speed, so that the victims would have no chance to grasp what was going on.” [Henry] Friedlander [author of *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*] describes the streamlined operation at T4 facilities: “From the moment they arrived at the killing center, patients were inexorably moved through a process to make their murder smooth and efficient ...”

At Union Stock Yards in Chicago, Jurgis Rudkus was struck by the “cold-blooded, impersonal way” the slaughterhouse workers swung the hogs up “without a pretence at apology, without the homage of a tear.”

From *Eternal Treblinka, Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust* by Charles Patterson

matters of fact. Equality is a moral idea, not an assertion of fact. There is no logically compelling reason for assuming that a factual difference in ability between two people justifies any difference in the amount of consideration we give to their needs and interests. *The principle of the equality of human beings is not a description of an alleged actual equality among humans: it is a prescription of how we should treat human beings.*

Jeremy Bentham, the founder of the reforming utilitarian school of moral philosophy, incorporated the essential basis of moral equality into his system of ethics by means of the formula: "Each to count for one and none for more than one." In other words, the interests of every being affected by an action are to be taken into account and given the same weight as the like interests of any other being. A later utilitarian, Henry Sidgwick, put the point in this way: "The good of any one individual is of no more importance, from the point of view (if I may say so) of the Universe, than the good of any other." More recently the leading figures in contemporary moral philosophy have shown a great deal of agreement in specifying as a fundamental presupposition of their moral theories some similar requirement that works to give everyone's interests equal consideration—although these writers generally cannot agree on how this requirement is best formulated.

It is an implication of this principle

of equality that our concern for others and our readiness to consider their interests ought not to depend on what they are like or on what abilities they may possess. Precisely what this concern or consideration requires us to do may vary according to the characteristics of

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

Mohandas Gandhi

those affected by what we do: concern for the well-being of children growing up in America would require that we teach them to read; concern for the well-being of pigs may require no more than that we leave them with other pigs in a place where there is adequate food and room to run freely. But the basic element—the taking into account of the interests of the being, whatever those interests may be—must, according to the principle of equality, be extended to all beings, black or white, masculine or feminine, human or nonhuman.

Thomas Jefferson, who was responsible for writing the principle of the equality of men into the American Declaration of Independence, saw this point. It led him to oppose slavery even though he was unable to free himself fully from his slaveholding background. He wrote in a letter to the author of a book that emphasized the notable intellectual achievements of Negroes in order to refute the then common view that they have limited intellectual capacities:

Be assured that no person living wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a complete refutation of the doubts I myself have entertained and expressed on the grade of understanding allotted to them by nature, and to find that they are on a par with ourselves . . . but whatever be their degree of talent it is no measure of their rights. Because Sir Isaac Newton was superior to others in understanding,

he was not therefore lord of the property or person of others.

Similarly, when in the 1850s the call for women's rights was raised in the United States, a remarkable black feminist named Sojourner Truth made the same point in more robust terms at a feminist convention:

They talk about this thing in the head; what do they call it? ["Intellect," whispered someone nearby.] That's it. What's that got to do with women's rights or Negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?

It is on this basis that the case against racism and the case against sexism must both ultimately rest; and it is in accordance with this principle that the attitude that we may call "speciesism," by analogy with racism, must also be condemned. Speciesism—the word is not an attractive one, but I can think of no better term—is a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species. It should be obvious that the fundamental objections to racism and sexism made by Thomas Jefferson and Sojourner Truth apply equally to speciesism. If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his or her own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit nonhumans for the

same purpose?

Many philosophers and other writers have proposed the principle of equal consideration of interests, in some form or other, as a basic moral principle; but not many of them have recognized that this principle applies to members of other species as well as to our own. Jeremy Bentham was one of the few who did realize this. In a forward-looking passage written at a time when black slaves had been freed by the French but in the British dominions were still being treated in the way we now treat animals, Bentham wrote:

The day *may* come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The

French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognized that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum* are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week or even a month, old. But suppose they were otherwise, what would it

"Whenever people say, 'We mustn't be sentimental,' you can take it they are about to do something cruel. And if they add, 'We must be realistic,' they mean they are going to make money out of it." Brigid Brophy

avail? The question is not, Can they reason? nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?

In this passage Bentham points to the capacity for suffering as the vital characteristic that gives a being the right to equal consideration. The capacity for suffering—or more strictly, for suffering and/or enjoyment or happiness—is not just another characteristic like the capacity for language or higher mathematics. Bentham is not saying that those who try to mark “the insuperable line” that determines whether the interests of a being should be considered happen to have chosen the wrong characteristic. By saying that we must consider the interests of all beings with the capacity for suffering or enjoyment Bentham does not arbitrarily exclude from

“Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages.” Thomas A. Edison

consideration any interests at all—as those who draw the line with reference to the possession of reason or language do. The capacity for suffering and enjoyment is a prerequisite for having interests at all, a condition that must be

satisfied before we can speak of interests in a meaningful way. It would be nonsense to say that it was not in the interests of a stone to be kicked along the road by a schoolboy. A stone does not have interests because it cannot

suffer. Nothing that we can do to it could possibly make any difference to its welfare. The capacity for suffering and enjoyment is, however, not only necessary, but also sufficient for us to say that a being has interests—at an absolute minimum, an interest in not suffering. A mouse, for example, does have an interest in not being kicked along the road, because [he or she] will suffer if [he or she] is . . .

In misguided attempts to refute the arguments of this book, some philosophers have gone to much trouble developing arguments to show that animals do not have rights. They have claimed that to have rights a being must be autonomous, or must be a member of a community, or must have the ability to respect the rights of others, or must possess a sense of

justice. These claims are irrelevant to the case for Animal Liberation. ...

If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that [his or her] suffering be counted equally with the like suffering—insofar as rough comparisons can be made—of any other being. If a being is not capable of suffering, or of experiencing enjoyment or happiness, there is nothing to be taken into account. So the limit of sentience (using the term as a convenient if not strictly accurate shorthand for the capacity to suffer and/or experience enjoyment) is the only defensible boundary of concern for the interests of others. To mark this boundary by some other characteristic

like intelligence or rationality would be to mark it in an arbitrary manner. Why not choose some other characteristic, like skin color?

Racists violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of their own race when there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race. Sexists violate the principle of equality by favoring the interests of their own sex. Similarly, speciesists allow the interests of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case.

Most human beings are speciesists ... ordinary human beings—not a few

What about the children?

[In 1873,] responding to reports from neighbors, [Etta Angell] Wheeler talked her way past a hostile stepmother into a New York tenement, to discover [Mary Ellen who was,] as she recalls in 1913, “a pale, thin child, barefooted, in a thin, scanty dress, so tattered that I could see she wore but one garment besides. It was December and the weather was bitterly cold. She was a tiny mite the size of five, though ... she was then nine.

“Across the table lay a brutal whip of

twisted leather strands and the child’s meager arms and legs bore many marks of its use. But the saddest part of her story was written on her face, in its look of suppression and misery, the face of a child unloved, of a child who has seen only the fearsome side of life.”

There were then no laws enforced in New York or indeed in the United States against cruelty to children. The child protection laws, such as they were, provided mainly for the care of children once they were already in custody of courts or charitable organizations. ... The Children’s Aid Society, founded in

1853 to help street orphans, promised to help, as did eight similar groups—but only if Wheeler could bring the girl to them. They had no authority to perform a rescue.

In desperation, Wheeler took her story to Henry Bergh ... who had begun the American SPCA—America’s first humane society—in 1866. ... Within 24 hours, Bergh had a detective at the tenement; within 48 hours, former ASPCA attorney Elbridge Gerry made unusual use of a writ of *habeas corpus* to bring Mary Ellen before Judge Lawrence of the New York State Supreme Court.

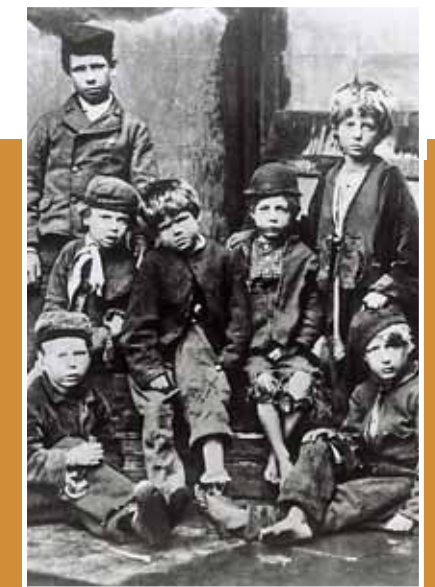
“She was brought into court sobbing bitterly and quite wild with fright,” Wheeler recounted. “She was wrapped in a carriage blanket and was without other clothing than the two ragged garments I had seen her in months before. Her body was bruised, her face disfigured, and the woman (her stepmother) as if to make testimony sure against herself, had the day before struck the child with a pair of shears, cutting a gash through the left eyebrow and down the cheek, fortunately escaping the eye.”

Testified Bergh, “The child is an animal. If there is no justice for it as a

human being, it shall at least have the rights of the dog in the street. It shall not be abused!”

Judge Lawrence agreed, invoking the animal protection statutes Bergh had recently obtained from the New York state legislature to deliver Mary Ellen into Wheeler’s custody, and to sentence the stepmother to one year in jail, the maximum the humane laws allowed.

The Mary Ellen case has been described by humane movement historians as the one “which started the child-saving crusade throughout the world.”



From “Who Helps the Helpless Child?” by Merritt Clifton, *The Animals’ Agenda*, December 1991

exceptionally cruel or heartless humans, but the overwhelming majority of humans—take an active part in, acquiesce in, and allow their taxes to pay for practices that require the sacrifice of the most important interests of members of other species in order to promote the most trivial interests of our own species.

There is, however, one general defense of the practices to ... be disposed of It is a defense which, if true, would allow us to do anything at all to non- humans for the slightest reason, or for no reason at all, without incurring any justifiable reproach. This

defense claims that we are never guilty of neglecting the interests of other animals for one breathtakingly simply reason: they have no interests. Nonhuman animals have no interests, according to this view, because they are not capable of suffering. By this is not meant merely that they are not capable of suffering in all the ways that human beings are—for instance, that a calf is not capable of suffering from the knowledge that he will be killed in six months' time. That modest claim is, no doubt, true; but it does not clear humans of the charge of speciesism, since it allows that animals may suffer

in other ways—for instance, by being given electric shocks, or being kept in small, cramped cages. The defense I am about to discuss is the much more sweeping, although correspondingly less plausible, claim that animals are incapable of suffering in any way at all; that they are, in fact, unconscious automata, possessing neither thoughts nor feelings nor a mental life of any kind.

Although ... the view that animals are automata was proposed by the seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes, to most people, then and now, it is obvious that

They eat dogs, don't they?

Not too long ago, our attention was drawn to horrifying pictures of dogs crated or trussed for slaughter in the markets of the Philippines. The looks on the faces of the animals were chilling, as they struggled for space in crowded crates, labored to breathe through the tin cans over their muzzles, or stared up at the man with the sledgehammer or knife.

One of the periodicals that ran the story told PETA that more than 150,000 protest letters were received on the issue. Letters also poured into the Philippines from all over the world, from people pained and outraged to have seen dogs bound, prodded, and beaten,

hit with wooden mallets and having their throats slit by grinning men and boys.

In reading the official Philippine government response to Western criticisms, I was struck by the control exercised by the Filipinos in omitting the most obvious rebuttal: that in the U.S., we tolerate the same sorts of abuses to equally frightened and vulnerable animals—lamb, chickens, pigs, and

cows—whose faces register horror as clearly as do those of the Philippine dogs.

Surely it is not only the fact that dogs are involved that upsets us. It is our understanding of the intensity of their experience. And it is the pain, suffering, fear, terror, panic, and loss of life that chill us.

Dogs and cows alike tremble, cry, and cringe from the approaching knife—watching wide-eyed, their hearts racing. For those of us who feel helpless, so removed from being able to do something about the Philippine dog-slaughter, there is something we can do right here at home. And it may be the most effective thing we can do for animals in our lifetimes: Go vegetarian.

Ingrid E. Newkirk



about animal skins

- Eighty-five percent of the fur industry's skins come from animals on fur factory farms where minks are commonly kept in cages 10 inches high by 18 inches long by 12 inches wide.
- Animals can languish in traps for days. Many trapped animals escape by chewing off their own feet, only to die later from blood loss, fever, infection, or predation.

- Trappers usually strangle, beat, or stomp trapped animals to death. Animals on fur factory farms may be gassed, anally electrocuted, or poisoned with strychnine or they may have their necks broken or be skinned alive.
- It takes more than three times as much energy to make a coat from trapped animals' pelts and more than 66 times as much from fur factory farm-raised animals' pelts as it does to make a fake fur coat.
- In many Asian countries, dogs and cats are killed for their skins, but the

- exported fur and leather products are rarely labeled to show this.
- The meat industry could not survive economically without the sale of animal hides.
- Australian sheep are mutilated during a process called "mulesing," in which farmers use garden shears to cut chunks of flesh from the animals' backsides without any painkillers. Millions are shipped thousands of miles under agonizing conditions to the Middle East, where they are slaughtered while fully conscious.

For more information and video documentation, please visit ShedYourSkin.com.





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about experimentation

- Millions of animals, averaging 36 per minute, are killed annually in U.S. laboratories in everything from burn and starvation experiments to weaponry testing and space research. Millions more rats, mice, guinea pigs, dogs, rabbits, and other animals are killed in product tests.
- In some states, pounds surrender dogs and cats to laboratories. “Bunchers” pick up strays, purchase litters, and/or trap and steal animals to sell for experiments.
- Outdated laws require that all drugs be tested on animals. Even so, more than half of all prescription drugs approved by the FDA in a nine-year period had to be relabeled or withdrawn from the market because of serious side effects. Cosmetics and household products are not required to be tested on animals.
- Sophisticated research methods, such as computer models, cell cultures, and human clinical and epidemiological studies are more humane, more accurate, less expensive, and less time-consuming than animal experiments.
- More than 500 cosmetics and household product companies have announced permanent bans on animal testing. Many companies have never performed tests on animals.

For more information and video documentation, please visit StopAnimalTests.com.

if, for example, we stick a sharp knife into the stomach of an unanesthetized dog, the dog will feel pain. That this is so is assumed by the laws in most civilized countries that prohibit wanton cruelty to animals. ...

Do animals other than humans feel pain? How do we know? Well, how do we know if anyone, human or non-human, feels pain? We know that we ourselves can feel pain. We know this from the direct experience of pain that we have when, for instance, somebody presses a lighted cigarette against the back of our hand. But how do we know that anyone else feels pain? We cannot directly experience anyone else's pain, whether that “anyone” is our best friend or a stray dog. Pain is a state of consciousness, a “mental event,” and as such it can never be observed. Behavior like writhing, screaming, or drawing one's hand away from the lighted cigarette is not pain itself; nor are the recordings a neurologist might make of activity within the brain observations of pain itself. Pain is something that we feel, and we can only infer that others are feeling it from various external indications.

In theory, we *could* always be mistaken when we assume that other human beings feel pain. It is conceivable that one of our close friends is really a very cleverly constructed robot, controlled by a brilliant scientist so as to give all the signs of feeling pain, but really no more sensitive than any other machine. We can never know, with

“There will come a time when the world will look back to modern vivisection in the name of Science, as they do now to burning at the stake in the name of religion.”

Prof. Henry J. Bigelow, M.D.

absolute certainty, that this is not the case. But while this might present a puzzle for philosophers, none of us has the slightest real doubt that our best friends feel pain just as we do. This is an inference, but a perfectly reasonable one, based on observations of their behavior in situations in which we would feel pain, and on the fact that we have every reason to assume that our friends are beings like us, with nervous systems like ours that can be assumed to function as ours do and to produce similar feelings in similar circumstances.

If it is justifiable to assume that other human beings feel pain as we do, is there any reason why a similar inference should be unjustifiable in the case of other animals?

Nearly all the external signs that lead us to infer pain in other humans can be seen in other species, especially the species most closely related to us—the species of mammals and birds. The behavioral signs include writhing, facial contortions, moaning, yelping or other forms of calling, attempts to avoid the source of pain, appearance of fear at the prospect of its repetition, and so on. In addition, we know that these animals have nervous systems very like ours, which respond physiologically as ours do when the animal is in circumstances in which we would feel pain: an initial rise of blood pressure, dilated pupils, perspiration, an increased pulse rate, and, if the stimulus continues, a fall in blood pressure. Although human beings have a more developed cerebral cortex

“Pain is pain, whether it be inflicted on man or on beast; and the creature [who] suffers it, whether man or beast, being sensible to the misery of it whilst it lasts, suffers evil ...” Humphrey Primatt, D.D.

than other animals, this part of the brain is concerned with thinking functions rather than with basic impulses, emotions, and feelings. These impulses, emotions, and feelings are located in the diencephalon, which is well developed in many other species of animals, especially mammals and birds.

We also know that the nervous systems of other animals were not

artificially constructed—as a robot might be artificially constructed—to mimic the pain behavior of humans. The nervous systems of animals evolved as our own did, and in fact the evolutionary history of human beings and other animals, especially mammals, did not diverge until the central features of our nervous systems were already in existence. A capacity to feel pain obviously enhances

a species’ prospects of survival, since it causes members of the species to avoid sources of injury. It is surely unreasonable to suppose that nervous systems that are virtually identical physiologically, have a common origin and a common evolutionary function, and result in similar forms of behavior in similar circumstances should actually operate in an entirely different manner



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Vegetarianism and nonviolence

I became a vegetarian in 1965. I had been a participant in all of the “major” and most of the “minor” civil rights demonstrations of the early sixties, including the March on Washington and the Selma to Montgomery March. Under the leadership of Dr. King, I became totally committed to nonviolence, and I was convinced that nonviolence meant opposition

to killing in any form. I felt the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” applied to human beings not only in their dealings with each other—war, lynching, assassination, murder, and the like—but in their practice of killing animals for food or sport. Animals and humans suffer and die alike. Violence causes the same pain, the same spilling of blood, the same stench of death, the same arrogant, cruel and brutal taking of life.

From Dick Gregory’s *Natural Diet for Folks Who Eat*, by Dick Gregory, 1973

about hunting

- During a single hunting season, hunters and trappers may kill as many as 134 million animals.
- Bowhunting is one of the cruelest forms of hunting because primitive archery equipment wounds more animals than it kills.
- Studies indicate that bowhunting yields more than a 58 percent wounding rate. For every animal dragged from the woods by a bow hunter, at least one animal is left wounded to suffer.
- Revenues from hunting licenses and duck stamps going to “conservation” are dwarfed by general tax revenues that subsidize programs that allow hunters on public lands.
- Most hunters do their killing of animals on public lands supported by taxpayers.
- In the last two centuries, hunters have helped wipe out dozens of species. Others have been brought to the brink of extinction by hunters.
- Hunters often kill the natural predators of animals they later claim have become too populous.
- In 1999, 92 people were shot and killed and 972 injured in hunting accidents in the U.S.



on the level of subjective feelings . . .

The overwhelming majority of scientists who have addressed themselves to this question agree. Lord Brain, one of the most eminent neurologists of our time, has said:

I personally can see no reason for conceding mind to my fellow men and denying it to animals ...

I at least cannot doubt that the interests and activities of animals are correlated with awareness and feeling in the same way as my own, and which may be, for aught I know, just as vivid.

The author of a book on pain writes:

Every particle of factual evidence supports the contention that the higher mammalian vertebrates experience pain sensations at least as acute as our own. To say that they feel less because they are lower animals is an absurdity; it can easily be shown that many of their senses are far more acute than ours—visual acuity in certain birds, hearing in most wild animals, and touch in others; these animals depend more than we do today on the sharpest possible awareness of a hostile environment. Apart from the complexity of the cerebral cortex (which does not directly perceive pain) their nervous systems are almost identical to ours and their reactions to pain remarkably similar, though lacking (so far as we know) the philosophical and moral overtones. The emotional

“[A]s long as human beings will go on shedding the blood of animals, there will never be any peace. There is only one little step from killing animals to creating gas chambers a la Hitler and concentration camps a la Stalin ... all such deeds are done in the name of 'social justice.'”

Isaac Bashevis Singer

element is all too evident, mainly in the form of fear and anger.

In Britain, three separate expert government committees on matters relating to animals have accepted the conclusion that animals feel pain. After noting the obvious behavioral evidence for this view, the members of the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals, set up in 1951, said:

[W]e believe that the physiological, and more particularly the anatomical, evidence fully justifies and reinforces the commonsense belief that animals feel pain.

And after discussing the evolutionary value of pain the committee's report concluded that pain is “of clear-cut biological usefulness” and this is “a third type of evidence that animals feel pain.” The committee members then went on to consider forms of suffering other than mere physical pain and added that they were “satisfied that animals do suffer from acute fear and terror.” Subsequent reports by British government committees on experiments on animals and on the welfare of animals under intensive farming methods agreed with this view, concluding that animals are capable of suffering both from straightforward physical injuries and from fear, anxiety, stress, and so on. Finally, within the last decade, the publication of scientific studies with titles such as *Animal Thought*, *Animal Thinking*, and *Animal Suffering: The Science of Animal Welfare* have made it plain that conscious awareness in

about circuses

- Animals do not voluntarily ride bicycles, stand on their heads, or jump through rings of fire. They don't perform these and other difficult tricks because they
- want to; they perform because they're afraid not to. It is standard practice to beat, shock, and whip them to make them perform.
- Trainers routinely punish elephants with sharp bullhooks by digging the metal hook into their sensitive flesh.
- Animals in circuses are hauled around

the country in poorly ventilated trailers and boxcars for up to 50 weeks a year in all kinds of extreme weather conditions.

- Elephants spend up to 96 percent of their time in chains while big cats, bears, and primates are forced to eat, drink, sleep, defecate, and urinate in the same cramped cages.

For more information and video documentation, please visit Circuses.com.



non-human animals is now generally accepted as a serious subject for investigation.

That might well be thought enough to settle the matter; but one more objection needs to be considered. Human beings in pain, after all, have one behavioral sign that nonhuman animals do not have: a developed language. Other animals may communicate with each other, but not, it seems, in the complicated way we do. Some philosophers, including Descartes, have thought it important that while humans can tell each other about their experience of pain in great detail, other animals cannot. (Interestingly, this once neat dividing line between humans and other species has now been

“Why do we make one reform topic a hobby and forget all others? Mercy, Prohibition, Vegetarianism, Woman’s Suffrage and Peace would make Old Earth a paradise, and yet the majority advocate but one, if any, of these.”
Flora T. Neff

threatened by the discovery that chimpanzees can be taught a language.) But as Bentham pointed out long ago, the ability to use language is not relevant to the question of how a

being ought to be treated—unless that ability can be linked to the capacity to suffer, so that the absence of a language casts doubt on the existence of this capacity.

This link may be attempted in two ways. First, there is a hazy line of philosophical thought ... which maintains that we cannot meaningfully attribute states of consciousness to beings without language. This position seems to be very implausible. Language may be necessary for abstract thought, at some level anyway; but states like pain are more primitive, and have nothing to do with language.

The second and more easily understood way of linking language and the existence of pain is to say that the best evidence that we can have that other creatures are in pain is that they tell us that they are. This is a distinct line of argument, for it is denying not that non-language-users conceivably *could* suffer, but only that we could ever

have sufficient reason to *believe* that they are suffering. Still, this line of argument fails too. As Jane Goodall has pointed out in her study of chimpanzees, *In the Shadow of Man*, when it comes to the expression of feelings and emotions language is less important than nonlinguistic modes of communication such as a cheering pat on the back, an exuberant embrace, a clasp of the hands, and so on. The basic signals we use to convey pain, fear, anger, love, joy, surprise, sexual arousal, and many other emotional states are not specific to our own species. The statement “I am in pain” may be one piece of evidence for the conclusion that the speaker is in pain, but it is not the only possible evidence, and since people sometimes tell lies, not even the

best possible evidence.

Even if there were stronger grounds for refusing to attribute pain to those who do not have a language, the consequences of this refusal might lead us to reject the conclusion. Human infants and young children are unable to use language. Are we to deny that a year-old child can suffer? If not, language cannot be crucial. Of course, most parents understand the responses of their children better than they understand the responses of other animals; but this is just a fact about the relatively greater knowledge that we have of our own species and the greater contact we have with infants as compared to animals. Those who have studied the behavior of other animals and those who have animals as



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What made Emily special?

“Emily is no ordinary cow,” reported the local papers. No, ordinary cows don’t have names. Communities don’t band together to save them. So, what made Emily special?

Emily grew up on a dairy farm. Despite repeated attempts, she never became pregnant, and there is no room for a barren cow on the milk production line.

One cold morning, Emily was loaded onto a truck and sent to Arena slaughterhouse. The smell of blood filled

the air, and her sensitive nose surely recognized that nearby, her sisters were dying. Thinking only of escape, she hurled her 1,400-pound frame over a 5-foot fence and fled.

For weeks, slaughterhouse workers tried to capture Emily, but somehow, she concealed herself in the woods. Kind people formed an “underground railroad,” leaving out hay and refusing to report sightings to officials. When Meg and Lewis Randa heard about Emily, they contacted the slaughterhouse owner, who agreed to sell her for \$1.

The Randas, assisted by an army of local supporters, set out to rescue the

frightened cow. For days, Emily eluded her rescuers. Then, on Christmas Eve, she decided to trust again and walked into the Randas’ borrowed trailer. The next day, a vegan Christmas dinner was served in the barn for all the guests, including Emily.

The Randas have come to know Emily—they have learned that she has a fondness for bread, likes to have her head scratched, and loves to give kisses with her big cow tongue. People visit her and bring her gifts, some leaving notes pinned to the barn. One read simply, “I used to eat cows. I’m sorry. No more.”

Am I blue?

by Alice Walker

There were many apple trees in our yard, and one by the fence that Blue could almost reach. We were soon in the habit of feeding him apples, which he relished. ... Sometimes he would stand very still just by the apple tree, and when one of us came out he would whinny, snort loudly, or stamp the ground. This meant, of course: I want an apple . . .

Blue was lonely. Blue was horribly lonely and bored. I was not shocked that this should be the case; five acres to tramp by yourself ... cannot provide many interesting events ... No, I was shocked that I had forgotten that human animals and nonhuman animals can communicate quite well ...

But then, in our second year at the house, something happened in Blue's life. One morning, looking out the window at the fog that lay like a ribbon over the meadow, I saw another horse, a brown one, at the other end of Blue's field. Blue appeared to be afraid of it, and for several days made no attempt to go near. We went away for a week. When we returned, Blue had decided to make friends and the two horses ambled or galloped along together, and Blue did not come nearly as often to the fence underneath the apple tree . . .

It did not, however, last forever. One day, after a visit to the city, I went



out to give Blue some apples. He stood waiting, or so I thought, though not beneath the tree. When I shook the tree and jumped back from the shower of apples, he made no move. I carried some over to him. He managed to half-crunch one. The rest he let fall to the ground. I dreaded looking into his eyes—because I had of course noticed that Brown, his partner, had gone—but I did look. If I had been born into slavery, and my partner had been sold or killed, my eyes would have looked like that. The children next door explained that Blue's partner had been "put with him," . . . so that they could mate and she conceive. Since that was accomplished, she had been taken back by her owner, who lived somewhere else.

Will she be back? I asked.
They didn't know.

Blue was like a crazed person. Blue

was, to me, a crazed person. He galloped furiously, as if he were being ridden, around and around his five beautiful acres. He whinnied until he couldn't. He tore at the ground with his hooves. He butted himself against his single shade tree. He looked always and always toward the road down which his partner had gone. And then, occasionally, when he came up for apples, or I took apples to him, he looked at me. It was a look so piercing, so full of grief, a look so *human*, I almost laughed (I felt too sad to cry) to think there are people who do not know that animals suffer.

Excerpt from "Am I Blue?" in *Living by the Word: Selected Writing 1973-1987*

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companions soon learn to understand their responses as well as we understand those of an infant, and sometimes better.

So to conclude: there are no good reasons, scientific or philosophical, for denying that animals feel pain. If we do not doubt that other humans feel pain we should not doubt that other animals do so too.

Animals can feel pain. As we saw earlier, there can be no moral justification for regarding the pain (or pleasure) that animals feel as less important than the same amount of pain (or pleasure) felt by humans. But what practical consequences follow from this conclusion? To prevent misunderstanding I shall spell out what I mean a little more fully.

If I give a horse a hard slap across the rump with my open hand, the horse may start, but [he or she] presumably feels little pain. [A horse's] skin is thick enough to protect against a mere slap. If I slap a baby in the same way, however, the baby will cry and presumably does feel pain, for [a baby's] skin is more sensitive. So it is worse to slap a baby than a horse, if both slaps are administered with equal force. But there must be some kind of blow—I don't know exactly what it would be, but perhaps a blow with a heavy stick—that would cause the horse as much pain as we cause a baby by slapping [him or her] with our hand. That is what I mean by "the same amount of pain," and if we consider it wrong to inflict that much pain on a baby for no good reason then we must, unless we are

"There will be no justice as long as man will stand with a knife or with a gun and destroy those who are weaker than he is."

Isaac Bashevis Singer

speciesists, consider it equally wrong to inflict the same amount of pain on a horse for no good reason . . .

There are many matters in which the superior mental powers of normal adult humans make a difference: anticipation, more detailed memory, greater knowledge of what is happening, and so on. Yet these differences do not all point to greater suffering on the part of the normal human being. Sometimes animals may

suffer more because of their more limited understanding. If, for instance, we are taking prisoners in wartime we can explain to them that although they must submit to capture, search, and confinement, they will not otherwise be harmed and will be set free at the conclusion of hostilities. If we capture wild animals, however, we cannot explain that we are not threatening their lives. A wild animal cannot distinguish an attempt to overpower and confine from an attempt to kill; the one causes as much terror as the other.

It may be objected that comparisons of the sufferings of different species are impossible to make and that for this reason when the interests of animals and humans clash the principle of equality gives no guidance. It is probably true that comparisons of suffering between members of different species cannot be made precisely, but precision is not essential. Even if we were to prevent the infliction of suffering on animals only when it is quite certain that the interests of humans will not be affected to anything like the extent that animals are affected, we would be forced to make radical changes in our treatment of animals that would involve our diet, the farming methods we use, experimental procedures in many fields of science, our approach to wildlife and to hunting, trapping and the wearing of furs, and areas of entertainment like circuses, rodeos, and zoos. As a result, a vast amount of suffering would be avoided.



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the PETA
guide to
animal
liberation

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Read, learn, share, and act!

Animal Liberation

by Peter Singer

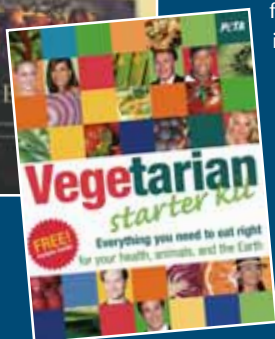
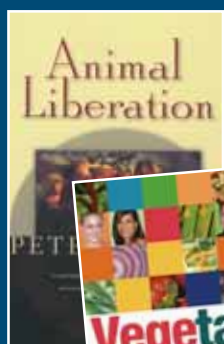
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Making Kind Choices

by Ingrid E. Newkirk

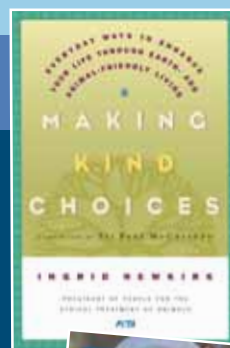
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animal rights

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