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7. Ibid.

8. Outside of Samuel Butler's Erewhon.

**For Further Discussion**

1. Feinberg claims that unborn generations have rights against us and that we have corresponding duties to them. But because we know so little about people who will live in the distant future, does it make sense to attribute any particular rights to them? Do they, for example, have a right to live?

2. Do you think that previous generations of humans violated any of your rights? Which ones?

3. How do you understand the concept of having a "sake"? How do you understand having an "interest"?

4. Do you agree with Feinberg that our duties regarding animals are direct duties to them? If we have duties to them, does this mean that they have rights?


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**All Animals Are Equal**

**Peter Singer**

In his influential book Animal Liberation (1975), from which the following selection is taken, philosopher Peter Singer developed a forceful argument in defense of the view that animals, at least those capable of sensation, deserve full moral consideration. Denying animals equal standing, what might be called "speciesism," is akin to denying equal standing on the basis of race or sex. The implications of this are far-reaching. Significant changes in our eating habits, in agriculture, in recreational activities, and in scientific research would be required once we recognize our direct responsibilities to animals.

In recent years a number of oppressed groups have campaigned vigorously for equality. The classic instance is the Black Liberation movement, which demands an end to the prejudice and discrimination that has made blacks second-class citizens. The immediate appeal of the black liberation movement and its initial, if limited, success made it a model for other oppressed groups to follow. We became familiar with liberation movements for Spanish-Americans, gay people, and a variety of other minorities. When a majority group—women—began their campaign, some thought we had come to the end of the road. Discrimination on the basis of sex, it has been said, is the last universally accepted form of discrimination, practiced without secrecy or pretense even in those liberal circles that have long prided themselves on their freedom from prejudice against racial minorities.

One should always be wary of talking of "the last remaining form of discrimination." If we have learnt anything from the liberation movements, we should have learnt how difficult it is to be aware of latent prejudice in our attitudes to particular groups until this prejudice is forcefully pointed out.

A liberation movement demands an expansion of our moral horizons and an extension or reinterpretation of the basic moral principle of equality. Practices that were previously regarded as natural and inevitable come to be seen as the result of an unjustifiable prejudice. Who can say with confidence that all his or her attitudes and practices are beyond criticism? If we wish to avoid being numbered amongst
the opponents, we must be prepared to thank even our most fundamental attitudes. We need to consider them from the point of view of those most disadvantaged by our attitudes and practices that follow from these attitudes. If we can make this unconditioned mental switch we may discover a pattern in our attitudes and practices that consistently operates so as to benefit one group—usually the one to which we ourselves belong—at the expense of another. In this way we may come to see that there is a case for a new liberation movement. My aim is to advocate that we make this mental switch in respect of our attitudes and practices towards a very large group of beings: members of species other than our own—or, as we popularly though misleadingly call them, animals. In other words, I am urging that we extend the same specia to other species the basic principle of equality that most of us recognize should be extended to all members of our own species.

All this may sound a little far-fetched, more like a parody of other liberation movements than a serious gender issue. In fact, in the past the idea of "The Rights of Animals" really has been used to parody the cause for women's rights. When Mary Wollstonecraft, a foremother of later feminists, published her Vindication of the Rights of Women in 1792, her ideas were widely regarded as absurd, and they were satirized in an anonymous publication entitled A Vindication of the Basic Principle of Brutes. The author of this satire (actually Thomas Taylor, a distinguished Cambridge philosopher and theologian) called Mary Wollstonecraft a "vagrant" and said of the Vindication: "The women's Rights movement is purely theoretical and not applicable to the animal kingdom."

Wollstonecraft's idea of equality was based on the premise that all beings, whether human or non-human, should be treated with equal respect and consideration. She argued that if animals were capable of reasoning, they could be as intelligent as humans. Her ideas were rejected at the time, but they laid the foundation for future animal rights movements.

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 depend on the nature of the members of the two groups. The principle of equality, I shall argue, requires a careful and equal consideration for different beings may lead to different treatment and different rights. For example, the difference in size between humans and non-human animals means that we cannot hold them equally well for these "beasts": yet we hold that brutality was no less brutality against them and that the torture on which they could be carried one stage further. If sound when applied to women, should the argument applied equally well to animals? Do you believe that all possible fairness gives an equal chance to both? If this is correct, however much we may hope it is the latter.

It would be folly for the opponent of racism to stake his whole case on a dogmatic commitment to one particular outcome of a difficult scientific issue which is still a long way off, seeking conclusions by showing that the inferences which this conclusion had been reached must be wrong, and if unsound when applied to women, it must also be unsound when applied to animals. The very same arguments had been used in each case.

One way in which we might reply to this argument is by saying that the case for equality between humans and non-human animals is based on the very same arguments had been used in each case.

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CHAPTER 6 - Externatism and Antropoororientation

All humans are equal. Like it or not, we must face the fact that humans come in different shapes and sizes; they come with differing mental capacities, differing intellectual abilities, differing amounts of bowel regulation and sensitivity to the needs of others, differing abilities to communicate effectively, and differing 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. It would be an unworkable demand.

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 humans differ as individuals in various ways, there are no differences between the races and races at all.

From the mere fact that a person is black or a woman, we cannot infer anything else about that person. This, they may say, is what is wrong with racism and sexism. The white racist claims that whites are superior to blacks—and although there are differences between 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.

This is a possible line of objection to racists and sexual discrimination. It is not, however, the way that many racists and sexists argue. Racists and sexists argue that there are differences between races and sexes; that these differences are inherent and that they should not be ignored.

So there is a difference between humans and non-human animals. However, this difference does not mean that we cannot hold them equally well for these "beasts": yet we hold that brutality was no less brutality against them and that the torture on which they could be carried one stage further. If sound when applied to women, should the argument applied equally well to animals? If this is correct, however much we may hope it is the latter.

Fortunately, there is no need to pin the case for equality on any particular outcome of this scientific investigation. The appropriate response to those who do not accept the evidence of genetically based differences in ability between races and sex is to ask whether their evidence is sufficient to stick the belief that the genetic explanation must be wrong. As the evidence to the contrary may turn out to be wrong, we should not make it quite clear that the claim to equality does not depend on intelligence, moral capacity, physical strength, or similar matters; the idea is a more important one.

In short, there is no compelling reason for assuming that a factual difference in ability between two
people justifies any difference in the amount of consideration we give to satisfying 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 humans.

Jeremy Bentham incorporated the essential basis of moral equality into his utilitarian system of ethics in 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 (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 which operates as a check on anyone's interpersonal claims upon others—although they cannot agree on how this requirement is best formulated.

It is an implication of this principle of equality that our concern for others ought not to depend on what they are like, or what utilities they possess—although precisely how that concern requires us to do may vary according to the characteristics of those affected by what we do. It is on this basis that the case against racism and the case against sexism must be made. This is the content of the principle, and it is in accordance with this principle that sexism is also to be condemned. If possessing a higher degree of IQ gives someone more moral worth than the other, then this principle would not permit another for his own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit nonhumans?

Many philosophers have proposed the principle of equality of interests, in some form or other, as a basic moral principle; but, as we shall see in more detail shortly, not many of them have recognized that this principle applies to members of other species as well as to our own. Bentham was one of the few who did realize this. In a forwarded-looking passage, written a time when black slaves in British dominions were still being treated much as we now treat nonhuman animals, Bentham wrote:

The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withheld from them by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blazonry of the lion is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the mercy of a tyrant. It may one day come to be recognized that the life, the liberty, the enjoyment of the leg, the vileness of the skin, or the termination of the or acerous, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it but that should trace the insuperable line is the faculty of reason, or perhaps the faculty of discerning? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as more a conversable animal, than an infant of a month, or a day, or even a month, old. But suppose they were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they reason? Not 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—more or less, for suffering and/or enjoyment or happiness—is not just another characteristic, like the capacity for language, or for higher mathematics. Bentham is not saying that those who try to make the "insuperable line" that determines whether the interests of a being should be considered happen to have selected the wrong characteristic. The capacity for suffering and enjoying things is a prerequisite for having interests at all, a condition that must be satisfied before we can speak of interests in any meaningful way. It would be nonsense to say that it was not up to us but to the others how we should treat our interests. In any case, the one human on the other hand, does have an interest in not being tormented, because it will suffer if it is.

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 of responsibilities that tax suffering be counted equally with the like suffering—in so far as rough comparisons can be made—of any other being. If experiencing enjoyment or happiness, there is nothing to be taken into account. This is why the "law of justice," the principle of equality requires that tax suffering be counted equally with the like suffering—in so far as rough comparisons can be made—of any other being. If experiencing enjoyment or happiness, there is nothing to be taken into account. This is why the "law of justice," the principle of equality requires that tax suffering be counted equally with the like suffering—in so far as rough comparisons can be made—of any other being. If experiencing enjoyment or happiness, there is nothing to be taken into account. This is why the "law of justice," the principle of equality requires that tax suffering be counted equally with the like suffering—in so far as rough comparisons can be made—of any other being.

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

The racist violates the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of his own race, where there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race. Similarly the speciesist allows the interests of his own species to override the greater interests of members of other species.

The pattern is the same in each case. Most human beings are speciesists. I shall now very briefly describe some of the practices that show this.

For the great majority of humans beings, especially in urban, industrialized societies, the most direct form of contact with members of other species is at meal times: we eat them. In doing so we treat them purely as means to our ends. We regard their life and well-being as subservient to our taste for a particular kind of dish. I say "taste" deliberately—in a purely matter of pleasing our palate. There can be no defence of eating animals on the grounds that society has established them beyond doubt that we could satisfy our need for protein and other essential nutrients far more efficiently with a diet that replaced animal flesh by soy beans, or products derived from soy beans, and other high-protein vegetable products. It is not merely the act of killing that indicates what we are ready to do to other species in order to gratify our tastes. The suffering we inflict on the animals which supply these products is an even closer indication of our speciesism that the fact that we are prepared to kill them. In order to have meat on the table at a price that people can afford, does not entail sacrifices of meat production that could generate animals in cramped, unsuitable conditions for the entire duration of their lives. Animals are treated like machines that convert fodder into flesh, and any innovation that results in a higher "conversion ratio" is liable to be adopted. As one authority on the subject has said, "cruelty is acknowledged only when profitability ceases." ... Since, as I have said, none of these practices cater for anything more than our pleasures of taste, our practice of rearing and killing other animals in order to eat them is a clear instance of the sacrifice of the most important interests of other beings in order to satisfy trivial interests of our own. To avoid speciesism we must step this practice, and each of us has a moral obligation to cease supporting the practice. Our custom is all the support that the meat-industry needs.

The decision to cease giving it that support may be difficult, but it is no more difficult than it would be for a white South African to go against the traditions of his society and free his slaves: if we do not change our dietary habits, how can we censure those slave-holders who would not change their own way of living?

The term discrimination may be observed in the widespread practice of experimenting on other species in order to see if certain substances are safe for human beings, or to test some psychological theory about the effect of severe punishment on learning, or to try out various new chemicals. In this case, things turn up... In the past, animal use in research has often misled this point, because it has been based on absolute terms. Would the abolitionist be prepared to let thousands die if they could be saved by experimenting on a single animal? The way to reply to this purely hypothetical question is to pose another: Would the experimenter be prepared to perform his experiment on an orphaned human infant, if that were the only way to save many lives? I say "orphan" to avoid the complication of parental feelings, although in doing so I am being unfair to the experimenter, since the nonhuman subjects of experiments are not orphans. If the experimenter is not prepared to use nonhuman infants to save them, then no discrimination seems to be involved. Since adult apes, cats, mice and other mammals are more aware of what is happening to them, more self-motivated, and so on, to be killed along the road by a schoolboy. A non does not have interests because it cannot suffer. Nothing that we can do it we could possibly make any difference to its welfare. A mouse, on the other hand, does have an interest in not being tormented, because it will suffer if it is.

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lower level of sentiment, awareness, ability to be self-directing, etc. No one familiar with the list of results predicted by most experiments on animals can have the slightest doubt that if this bias were eliminated the number of experiments performed would be a minute fraction of the number performed today.

Experimenting on animals, and eating their flesh are perhaps the two major forms of speculation in our society. By comparison, the third and last form of speculation is so minor as to be insignificant, but it is its hallmark of some special interest to those for whom this article was written. I am referring to speculation in contemporary philosophy.

Philosophy ought to question the basic assumptions of the age. Thinking through, critically and carefully, what most people take for granted, I believe, the chief task of philosophy, and it is this task that makes philosophy worthwhile and necessary. Regrettably, philosophy does not always live up to its historic role. Philosophers are often called in for consultation and they are taken to task by all the perceptions of the society to which they belong. Sometimes they succeed in breaking free of the prevailing ideology; more often they become its most sophisticated defenders. In this case, philosophy as practiced in the universities today does not challenge anyone's perceptions about us or other species. By their writings, these philosophers who tackle problems that touch upon the issue reveal that they are locked in the same unchanging assumptions as most other humans, and what they say tends to confirm the reader in his or her comfortable speculation habit.

For example, I would like to quote from a paper on the topic of the ethics of biotechnology that I know dealt with the issue of animal rights. In one of the sections, the author states that "the intrinsic worth of all living things is independent of their usefulness to humans. It is this principle that underlies the morality of animal rights."

However, I would like to point out that this principle is not without its critics. Many philosophers have argued that animal rights are not as important as human rights, and that the morality of animal rights does not necessarily follow from the intrinsic worth of all living things.

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that the ethics of biotechnology involves not only the ethical treatment of animals, but also the ethical treatment of all living things, including plants and microorganisms. It is only through a careful and thoughtful examination of these issues that we can truly understand the complexities of the relationship between humans and non-human animals.

References:

Further reading:
- "The Ethics of Biotechnology" by Tom Regan
- "Animal Rights and Human Morality" by Peter Singer
- "The道德 of Biotechnology" by Peter Singer
...not to possess human shape is a disqualifying condition. However faithful or intelligent a dog may be, it would be a mere insubstantiality to attribute to him interests that could be weighed in an equal balance with those of human beings... If, for instance, one had to decide between feeding a hungry baby or a dog, anyone who chose the dog would generally be regarded as morally defective, unable to recognize a fundamental truth of claims.

This is what distinguishes our attitude to animals from our attitude to imbeciles. It is odd to say that we should respect equally the dignity or personality of the imbecile and of the rational man... but there is nothing odd about saying that we should respect equally the interests equally, i.e., that we should give to the interests of each the same serious consideration as claims to considerate priority for some of the intelligent that we can recognize and evaluate. Bertrand Russell's statement of the basis of this consideration, as though for imbeciles seems to me correct, but why should there be any fundamental inequality of claims between a dog and a human imbecile? Bertrand Russell's statement of the basis of the consideration, as though for imbeciles seems to me correct, but why should there be any fundamental inequality of claims between a dog and a human imbecile? 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