

‘Animal Liberation’ and Deep Ecology

“Animal Liberation at 30”, Peter Singer

- Singer is generally regarded as a ‘strict consequentialist’. What does this mean?
- Overview of Singer’s argument for ‘equal consideration of interests’
 - In the context of the ‘animal rights movement’, what does it mean to say that “the ethical position on which the movement rests needs no reference to rights.”
- Two questions
 - 1) can speciesism itself be defended?
 - § “If the argument works for both the narrower circle of family and friends and the wider sphere of the species, it should also work for the middle case: race”
 - 2) if not, what justifies placing human beings in categories of greater moral significance?
 - § Lack of capacity to reciprocate (no social contract possible – what about unborn?)
 - § Ability to reason, self-awareness, possession of a sense of justice, language, autonomy (‘the argument from marginal cases’)
- “My own opposition to speciesism is based..not on rights, but on the thought that a difference in species is not an ethically defensible ground for giving less consideration to the interests of a sentient being than we give to similar interests of a member of our own species...the interest a being has in continued life...will depend in part on whether the being is aware of itself as existing over time, and is capable of forming future-directed desires...the core question [is whether] all and only human beings [should] be protected by rights.”
- Overview of current issues Singer mentions
 - Fur
 - Factory farming and slaughterhouse abuses
 - Biomedical/cosmetics research
 - Citizen referenda (Florida, and now California) and industry CSR
 - What other issues seem pressing or relevant to you?
- From the original *New York Review* article: Animal liberation “does not tell us that we will become healthier, or enjoy life more, if we cease exploiting animals. Animal Liberation will require greater altruism on the part of mankind than any other liberation movement.” How is this different from—or similar to—other social and political movements, including environmentalism?
- The importance (not referenced by Singer) of distinguishing animal rights and animal welfare

From Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac*

- Clearly a very different writing style than Singer’s...in what way?

Thinking Like A Mountain

- “Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf”
- “too much safety seems to yield only danger in the long run”

The Land Ethic

- Why does Leopold open with the story of Odysseus hanging a dozen slave girls (on one rope)?
- What is “the ethical sequence”?
 - Progression of ethics
 - § Relations between individuals
 - § Relations between individual and society (Golden Rule – principle of personality)
 - § The land ethic as the third step in a sequence