

Armstrong and Botzler: Foreward, Intro, and Peter Singer's *Practical Ethics*

Peter Singer, excerpt from *Practical Ethics*

- Understanding what Singer means by the 'equal consideration of interests'
- Quoting Bentham: "the question is not, can they *reason*? Nor can they *talk*? But, *can they suffer*?"
- "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 at all...[and] the limit of sentience...is the only defensible boundary of concern for the interests of others."
- Singer's critique of **speciesism** (and the analogy to racism, sexism, etc.)
- The case of defending animal research (as against human subject research) [38]
- the case of 'mental anguish' (or anticipation...), and the lack thereof (both can be problematic)
- the problem of interspecies pain/pleasure valuation
- the principle of equal consideration of interests in practice: animals as food, animals as research subjects

From "Animal Liberation at 30"

- on speciesism ("a prejudice that survives because it is convenient for the dominant group")
 - two distinct questions (note that they're not the same!): 1) can speciesism itself be defended? 2) If not, "are there other characteristics about human beings" that justify such extreme moral differentiation?
 - How about this argument: "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."
- on the **argument from marginal cases**
 - this is where Singer gets in 'trouble', both in the interview and elsewhere, with his defense of infanticide, etc.
 - What is a **person**? An acephalous child? A chimp? Neither? Both?
- the problem of interspecies valuation of preferences
- the case of 'mental anguish', and distinguishing 'nociception' from pain from suffering
- What does Singer mean when he says that 'animal liberation' is a 'test of human nature'?

From "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

- **Distributive justice** and the argument that charity is not a **supererogatory** good.
- Philosophical thought and the role of the **deductive syllogism**
- If we accept the principle of equal consideration, do his views on global obligation necessarily follow?
- The (in)famous case of the suit and the drowning child (the role of acts versus omissions, to a **consequentialist**)

Bernie Rollin's "Reasonable Partiality"

- Rollin is saying that much animal ethics lacks **praxis**, or the translation of theory to practice
 - Specifically, he is endorsing **gradualism** (of a 'judo not sumo' variety) —are there any cases in which gradualism might not work, or in which more 'extreme' tactics played vital roles? Are there ways that "press[ing] for better treatment of companion animals first" might hurt other causes, or is it a good way to get a 'foot in the door'?
- Should capacity to feel pain/pleasure be the deciding factor of which beings deserve moral consideration? Why or why not? Does it matter if a being has self awareness or a **theory of mind**?
- Questioning the neutrality of 'scientific ideology'
- Do you think Rollin, following Plato's *anamnesis*, is right to say that we should trust 'moral common sense'?
- What were/are the limits of the 'anti-cruelty ethic', especially in an age when we can, to use Rollin's language, "force square pegs into round holes"?
 - Rollin's 5 factors leading the anti-cruelty ethic to obsolescence (112-113)
- Under what circumstances should "our interests come first"? (In other words, when is 'reasonable partiality' reasonable?) Should animal interests be **discounted**? Completely dismissed? Should there be, in Singer's words, an equal consideration of interests?