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How Ought We To Live With Nonhuman Animals? Peter Singer's Answer: Animal Liberation Parts I & II (two papers)

## PART I

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## **Abstract**

*In this paper and the next I discuss Peter Singer's approach to answering the question of how one ought to live with nonhuman animals. In the first paper I situate Singer's work within the larger historical context of moral concern for animals, looking at previous public consensus on the issue, its breakdown and its re-emergence with Singer in the 1970s. In the second paper, I take a closer look at Singer's highly influential book, *Animal Liberation* (1975), and argue that as activist literature, his chapter on animal experimentation for example can be seen as morally persuasive in ways other than simply as an example of (the consequences) of speciesism. How I do this is to place Singer's work side by side that of 19<sup>th</sup> century activist Francis Power Cobbe's, in particular her pamphlet *Light in Dark Places* (1883), and examine their work against the criticisms from scientists defending the practice of animal experimentation.*

Peter Singer played a key role in bringing a particular moral problem to light; he came to name this problem in a now famous philosophical treatise. *Animal Liberation* was first published as a review essay in *The New York Review of Books* (NYRB) and two years later, in 1975, as a full-length book published by the *New York Review*. Of Singer himself, we might describe him as both a thinker *and* a doer, a philosopher *and* an activist. He is at once a reformer involved in making a moral problem public, a professional exercising cognitive authority, and a philosopher writing moral theory (Addelson, 1995: 29). In this chapter I will discuss some of the important ways in which moral concern for animals was brought to light and how certain things people were doing to/with animals were established as matters of common concern, concentrating in particular on Peter Singer's contribution and involvement in the process.

In so doing I will loosely draw on two concepts of practical import. They are 'social worlds' and 'arenas' (Addelson, 1993: 276). Briefly, 'social worlds' are worlds of 'knowers' and 'doers', or 'knower/doers' who collectively perform particular sorts of actions to produce those worlds and whose interactions involve the creation of and struggle over moral problems. They are 'knowers' because they organise and interpret the knowledge regarding the moral problem(s) of their concern and indeed create the definitions by which the problem is known. They are 'doers' because they participate in the process by which the problem is brought to light. 'Arenas' refer to sites of contestation, where social worlds or sub-worlds of social worlds come together to resolve, or attempt to resolve, their differences (Addelson, 1993: passim).

Several social worlds will be referred to throughout this discussion. Some concern families, friends, and acquaintances; others concern academic professions including the philosophical and the scientific and still others concern thinker/doers involved in animal advocacy at a grassroots level. These worlds and the tensions between them will help to illuminate some of the important ways in which concern for animals as a moral problem came to light. While Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* marks a particularly important moment in the modern history of concern for animals and is indeed the main focus of this discussion, I will begin with a brief historical sketch of moral concern for animals so as to contextualise the debate, concentrating in particular on vivisection as an arena contestation.

### **Previous consensus and its breakdown: a brief historical survey**

In terms of moral consensus, concern for animals has at various times and in various places been more publicly endorsed than at other times. For example, in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain, public concern for the plight of particular groups of animals had taken hold. Various organisations were formed advocating the proper care and treatment of both wild and domestic animals. The *Society for the Prevention*

of *Cruelty to Animals* (SPCA) was formed in 1824, two years after legislation protecting animals from cruelty – the first of its kind – was passed in British Parliament. Royal patronage was accorded in 1840, thus becoming the *Royal Society for the Prevention and Cruelty to Animals* (RSPCA)) (Kean, 1998: 35). The *Animal Friends' Society* and the *Rational Humanity Group* soon followed, and in 1859 the *Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association* (MDFCTA) was formed, providing for the first time free fresh drinking water to weary animal and human travellers on their journeys to or through various metropolitan areas in Britain (Kean, 1998: 54). In the late 1800s the *Horse Accident Prevention Society* and the *Battersea Dogs' Home* were founded along with several anti-vivisection societies concerned for what they saw as the horrific cruelty enacted upon mostly domestic animals by the men of science.

In the late 1870s Frances Power Cobbe, a woman at the forefront of several reform movements including the emancipation of women, children and the poor, founded the *Victoria Street Society*; an organisation dedicated to the cessation of vivisectional practice. The Society eventually split into two becoming the *National Anti-Vivisection Society* (NAVS) led by Stephen Coleridge (great grandson of Samuel Taylor Coleridge) and the *British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection* (BUAV), more or less led by Cobbe herself (Kean, 1998: 110). Cobbe wrote extensively on the issue of vivisection and her *Light In Dark Places* (1883), a pamphlet 'intended to convey...ocular illustration of the meaning of the much disputed word *Vivisection*' will be the subject of some discussion later in this chapter (Cobbe, 2004 (1883): 293).

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries strong opposition to cruelty towards animals persisted, with women continuing to play pivotal roles in exposing and opposing the brutality of various practices involving animals. Against the practice of vivisection, the militant actions of Louise Lind af Hageby and Leisa Schartau stand out along side those of Frances Power Cobbe. Like Cobbe before them, Hageby and Schartau brought to light the practices of particular experimenters with the publication of their work, but unlike Cobbe in her tactic of reprinting drawings and extracts from the physiologists own pen and distributing the reprints to the public, the two women offered first-hand accounts of what they witnessed in physiology classes taught by William Bayliss at the University of London in 1903 (Kean, 1998: 139).

The publication of their accounts set in place a series of events now seen to be central to the history of the vivisection debate in Britain, and indeed to the process by which a concern for animals as a moral problem was brought to light. The descriptions of what the women saw later became the basis of their book entitled *The Shambles of Science*, the manuscript of which was read by Stephen Coleridge, and later published by NAVS in 1903 (Ryder, 2000: 135). The publication led William Bayliss to sue Coleridge for libel, with Bayliss obtaining a guilty verdict of defamation against Coleridge and damages of 2000 pounds (Elston, 1987: 285). The book and the trial served to sway public opinion in favour of Hageby, Schartau, Coleridge and their cause, with many letters being sent to the press and money donated to help pay for the fine (Ryder, 2000: 135). Hageby and Shartau withdrew their book for revision, removing the chapter that was the cause of much of the controversy and republished

the rest under the title *The Shambles of Science: Extracts from the Diary of Two Students of Physiology*.

The contentious chapter, entitled 'Fun', described not only a particular vivisection in progress but also the interactions of the participants involved and so exposed the social world of the scientists, or more specifically, the scientific sub-world of physiology, to the greater public. Some forty years or so earlier Claude Bernard, a French physiologist of some repute and an avid supporter of vivisectional practice, described the physiologist thus:

[He] is not an ordinary man: He is a scientist, possessed and absorbed by the scientific idea he pursues. He does not hear the cries of animals, he does not see their flowing blood, he sees nothing but his idea, and is aware of nothing but an organism that conceals from him the problem he is seeking to solve. (Greek & Greek, 2001: 29)

Hageby and Shartau's account tells a very different story and it was, in large part, their descriptions of the behaviour of the participants themselves that caused much of the uproar that ensued. The chapter begins with an extract from British novelist, Hall Caine, describing how the vivisector and his work are seen, morally speaking.

His weary eyes...were full of the measureless pity that is in the eyes of the surgeon who is about to vivisect of a dumb creature because it is necessary for the welfare of the human race. (Lind-af-Hageby & Schartau 2002 (1903): 155)

The extract provided the authors with a useful literary and philosophical foil to the experiences the two women come to describe. According to their account, the participants at the lecture on 'The Mechanism of the Secretory Process' demonstrate collective behaviour more akin to entertainment than medical education. 'There is nothing of the serene dignity of science about the place', the women write, 'everybody looks as if he expected an hour's amusement; if he gets instruction in the bargain—well, it is all the better' (Lind-af-Hageby & Schartau 2002 (1903): 156). They go on to describe how a dog is carried into the lecture room atop an operation-board, to which its legs, body and head are firmly fixed, and who is subsequently cut up and had its internal organs exposed and manipulated. A large incision in the neck, made some time earlier by the lecturer, exposes the gland that is the focal point of the lecture. Unfortunately the gland does not behave as it should throughout the experiment, but this, the women write, seemed of little concern or consequence to the lecturer or his students; rather it became a source of amusement. They write:

The rate of flow [of saliva] ought now to be "greatly accelerated", but it does not behave nicely and refuses to be accelerated. Laughter and applause.

And again,

The saliva once more clearly demonstrates its want of salivary education and appears like a gush from a waterfall. Roars of laughter and uproarious stamping of feet. (Lind-af-Hageby & Schartau 2002 (1903): 156)

Later, they say, when describing earlier experiments he had conducted on dogs in a tone similar to that employed during the lecture itself, the experimenter elicits more laughter and applause from the students. In all, according to the authors, a spirit of

jocularity prevailed throughout the lecture, with loud conversations, jokes and laughter commonplace. Regarding the subject of the experiment, his futile attempts at escape were also a source of mirth: 'the dog will not run away nor will he offend our ears by any loud yelps; besides, if he did try both it would be rather amusing' (Lind-af-Hageby & Schartau 2002 (1903): 156). Further, the women describe how, when the lecturer re-enters the laboratory, 'the dog's struggles are changed into convulsive trembling of the whole body'. 'This is nothing unusual', they say, 'the animals seem to realise the presence of their tormentors long before these touch them' (Lind-af-Hageby & Schartau 2002 (1903): 156). Upon completion of the lecture, the lecturer rings a bell and the attendant disconnects the operation-board from the electrical apparatus, removing the dog and board from the theatre, although not before banging and stumbling through the door further adding to the general jollity of the participants (Lind-af-Hageby & Schartau 2002 (1903): 157). Recalling Caine's words, the women end their chapter: 'what a lovely picture! But things are not so beautifully sentimental, and the welfare of the human race is sometimes rather far away' ((Lind-af-Hageby & Schartau 2002 (1903): 157).

As it was later revealed the dog in question had been subjected to a series of vivisections over several months, culminating in the one attended and described by Hageby and Schartau, after which it was killed (Ryder, 2000: 135). Hageby and Schartau's book and Coleridge's trial received widespread public attention, an unexpected outcome of which was the erection of a bronze statue in Battersea in 1906, with full Council approval, commemorating the Brown Dog referred to by the two women. The inscription read, complete with capitalization for emphasis:

In Memory of the Brown Terrier Dog Done to Death in the Laboratories of University College in February 1903, after having endured Vivisection extending over more than Two Months and having been handed over from one Vivisector to Another Till Death came to his Release. Also in memory of the 232 dogs Vivisected at the same place during the year 1902. Men and women of England, how long shall these Things be? (Kean, 1998: 153).

Deliberately provocative, the statue became the focal point for numerous riots, protests and demonstrations by pro and anti vivisection supporters alike. Richard Ryder (2000: 136) describes the violent nature of some of the protests involving medical students attempting to remove the statue and local Battersea citizens defending it. Over a number of weeks in 1907 mobs of students, some numbering in the 1000s, marched in protest shouting slogans defending their professors, some even resorting to violently invading women's suffrage meetings, one of which Louise Lind af Hageby was attending at the time (Ryder, 2000: 136). Despite their protests though, 'parliament, the Battersea Borough Council, and public opinion generally, sided with the brown dog' (Ryder, 2000: 136). Three years later however, the statue was removed by Council and likely destroyed despite a petition signed by over 20,000 locals to have it remain where it was (Kean, 1998: 153). In turn, several thousand people attended a protest meeting in Trafalgar Square over its removal, including representatives from a number of trade unions (Ryder, 2000: 136). In the end however the statue was neither returned nor replaced. The Brown Dog Affair, as it came to be known marked a significant moment in the history of contestation over vivisection. The Affair, which had begun with the publication of personal descriptions exposing

the behaviour and practices of the scientific world, culminated in a level of public protest yet unseen over the mistreatment of animals.

With the advent of two world wars and certain advances made in science claimed to be in large part due to experiments on animals, the animal welfare movement, in Ryder's words, stagnated. 'The animal welfare organisations, dominated by middle-class women, continued their good work', but he says, 'without the mass support which they had enjoyed before the war' (Ryder, 2000: 142). During the mid to late 1920s, more than 1300 animals were killed in chemical warfare experiments and by 1944 over 1.3 million experiments of various kinds were conducted annually throughout Britain (Kean, 1998: 180). Outside Britain, biomedical research proliferated during the twentieth century, particularly in the United States. American scientists were paid more, had a higher professional status than their European counterparts and importantly faced little or (next to) no opposition to their experimental practices from anti-vivisection organisations such as those in existence in Britain (Monamy, 2000: 26).

In the years during and following the first world war, anti-vivisection societies in Britain faced not only a downturn in support, but female members in particular faced a new and potentially damaging threat to their cause. Hilda Kean writes that:

The suggestion that those who campaigned on behalf of animals were out of tune with the times was increasingly directed towards women. In the same way that the cause of animals had received a boost when linked with suffrage feminism before the war, now in a time of backlash against feminism such women bore the brunt of hostile criticism (Kean, 1998: 181).

The potential link between women and sentimentalism was something Richard Ryder claims Frances Power Cobbe was only too keenly aware of and only by 'cleverly associating her feminism with an aura of respectability and moral conservatism' was she able to make it difficult for critics to discredit both her and her work (Ryder, 2000: 142). In the years following her death attitudes such as those expressed by French physiologist Elie de Cyon were becoming more commonplace. de Cyon suggested that the animal welfare issue was merely an 'outlet for frustrated old maids', and that while spinsters in Catholic countries took to convents, in Protestant countries such women 'directed their 'disordered minds' towards anti-vivisection' (Ryder, 2000: 142). This unfortunate link between women and a sentimentalist approach to animal welfare seems, for the most part, to have persisted throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite the achievements of such women as Frances Power Cobbe, Louise Lind af Hageby and Leisa Schartau (and the many more of their era uncited here).

The attitude which developed towards female members of animal welfare organisations is a useful indicator of how far moral consensus had waned concerning the plight of animals: associated with 'womanish' sentiment, the issue no longer held public attention. Given this, the significance of the opening anecdote to *Animal Liberation* is made plain. The anecdote describes two seemingly older British women caught in the grip of confused sentimentalism towards animals. The women had heard Peter Singer was writing a book about animals and so invited him and Renata (his

wife) to tea, the women themselves having written a book about animals some time earlier. Singer writes:

When we arrived our hostess's friend was already there, and she certainly was keen to talk about animals. "I do love animals," she began...and she was off. She paused while refreshments were served, took a ham sandwich, and then asked us what pets we had. (Singer, 1976: x)

The anecdote operates as a useful counterpoint by which Singer distances his work and begins to re-establish concern for animals as a public problem: how one does this, Singer goes on to argue, is not through sentimentalism but through reasoned, rational inquiry. Interestingly, as I shall show later, features of his work, particularly concerning the middle chapters of *Animal Liberation*, share common strategies with those of the early (female) campaigners Cobbe, Shartau and Hageby. For now though Singer's involvement in the process by which concern for animals came to light must be considered in more detail.

### **The (re)emergence of consensus: *Animal Liberation***

I think [I am most proud of] *Animal Liberation*. I've changed a few things in the second edition, but basically it's a book that's stood the test of time. The other thing I'm pleased with is that people keep coming up to me and saying, "Your book changed our lives. We've abandoned exploiting animals and are involved in the movement." I am pleased both personally and as a professional philosopher to have shown that philosophy and rational argument can make a difference. (A Conversation with Peter Singer, Part I, 1994)

Peter Singer participated in a variety of social worlds important to the process by which concern for animals as a moral problem came to light. I will use some of these worlds to trace the formation and growth of the modern animal advocacy movement and to mark certain aspects of Singer's own moral passage. The initial stages of his moral passage concerns the 'Informal Oxford Group' (IOG), a tag borrowed from Richard Ryder to denote a particular group of thinker/doers active at a particular time and in a particular place to which both he and Peter Singer belonged (Ryder, 2000: 6). How this group in their collective action together worked to make this problem public is crucial to the movement and so constitutes our starting point.

In his autobiographical account of the animal liberation movement Singer tells us that prior to his awakening regarding the plight of animals, the 'connections between [his] philosophical studies and [his] everyday life would have been hard to discern' (Singer, 1986: 148). One of the important things we can infer from this is that in aligning the two – that is, in aligning his professional and 'everyday' lives or worlds – he believed he had found an answer to how we should live with animals. It was to be a view shared by the other members of the IOG and one that characterised their struggle in bringing the moral problem of animal suffering to light.

In 1969 Singer had moved to Oxford to pursue his aspirations of an academic career in ethics and political philosophy. He tells us that he had no distinctive views about

the ethical treatment of animals other than he disapproved of cruelty; to his mind animal welfare was 'as a cause for kindly old ladies rather than for serious political reformers' (Singer, 1986: 149). It was a chance meeting with Richard Keshen, also a student in philosophy, that was to change his life and set in motion a series of events that would later become the foundations of the modern animal liberation movement. Sharing a college lunch, Singer noticed that Keshen chose a meat-free option. The discussion that followed on the topic of vegetarianism and the mistreatment of particularly farm animals was the start of many more to come. Singer writes:

What Richard Keshen told me about the treatment of farm animals, combined with his arguments against our neglect of the interests of animals, gave me a lot to think about, but I was not about to change my diet overnight. Over the next two months, together with my wife, Renata, I met Richard's wife, Mary, and the two other Canadian philosophy students, Roslind and Stanley Godlovitch, who had been responsible for Richard and Mary becoming vegetarians...They had come to see our treatment of non-human animals as analogous to the brutal exploitation of other races by whites in earlier centuries. This analogy they now urged on us, challenging us to find a morally relevant distinction between humans and non-humans which could justify the differences we make in our treatment of those who belong to our own species and those who do not. (Singer, 1986: 149).

Eventually, Singer writes, he and Renata, 'if [they] were to retain [their] self-respect and to continue to take moral issues seriously' decided to stop eating animals (1986: 149).

The extract is significant because it provides an insight into a) the nature of the group's collective behaviour and what made it unique among activists, and b) to the ideas that would later become the philosophical underpinnings of Singer's *Animal Liberation*, which I will discuss in the next section. What is evident from the extract, at least as Singer tells it, is a collective commitment not only to an abstinence of eating meat, but to the rational, moral justification for that abstinence, and indeed the belief that such justification would convince others to abstain. Most members of the IOG, to which we could add Richard Ryder, Andrew Linzey, David Wood, Michael Peters and Stephen Clark, were professional thinkers in some capacity or other, and so members of certain academic worlds or sub-worlds to which rational inquiry is a valued form of communication. What this group did that was particularly unique, was to publish their moral arguments, not in specialised journals relating to their disciplines, but in books directed at a wider audience, the aim being to effect change in attitudes and practice at the public level. It was the book edited by the Godlovich's, *Animals, Men and Morals* (1971), the first to be published by members of the group, and its (poor) public reception that led to Singer's own publication.

'Profoundly disappointing' was how Singer described the lack of political and social impact of *Animals Men and Morals*. 'We had great hopes for it', he writes, 'for it demanded revolutionary change in our attitudes to and treatment of non-human animals' (Singer, 1986: 150), but the book was ignored for the most part by the British press and public alike; the only good news to come from the experience was that a publisher had agreed to produce an American edition (Singer, 1986: 150). Determined to get a better response in America, Singer decided to write an unsolicited review-article in support of the book, which would also incorporate his own views on

the subject. He chose *The New York Review of Books* as the publisher most likely to print the review, which they did. The article was accepted and published in April 1973.

*Animals, Men and Morals* sold reasonably well and so was moderately successful; Singer's review-article more so. He received numerous letters from the public in support of the views expressed in his review-article. It was suggested to him that he develop the ideas into a full-length book, which he subsequently did, and which *The New York Review* published in 1975 (Singer, 1986: 151). He writes that the book was not an immediate success. In a tone tinged with disappointment, he also writes that it seemed to him that the only effect the book was having in the immediate to short term 'was to put the question of animals and ethics onto the list of topics discussed in applied ethics courses in university philosophy departments' (Singer, 1986: 151). Recalling that his aim and the aim of the IOG generally was to generate, through reasoned debate, political advocacy and reform at the public level, ethics about animals limited to the social world of the academy and a 'battle of ideas' amongst its members was a poor substitute. Here again we see how important the alignment of professional and everyday worlds was to Singer, this time in the context of society writ large. Singer did not see himself as simply a philosopher writing moral theory, rather, we might say, in writing moral theory he saw himself as a reformer making a moral problem public.

#### *The social Impact of 'Animal Liberation'*

There was no animal liberation movement prior to the publication of his book, or if there was, it certainly did not have the degree of consensus the movement shared after the book's publication, such was its impact. *Animal Liberation* itself came to be tagged the 'bible of the animal liberation movement' and James Jasper and Dorothy Nelkin (1992: 90) boldly claim that, almost every activist 'either owns or has read [the book]'. The IOG through Singer's work particularly triggered a widespread protest movement, something they had hoped to do from the outset. Indeed it has become a worldwide social movement, with liberation organisations operating in, for example, Australia, Great Britain, Europe, Canada and the United States. In the preface to the book's second edition, published in 1990 Singer responds to the 'bible' tag and the success of the movement:

It is a line that I cannot help find flattering, but it makes me uncomfortable at the same time. I don't believe in bibles: no book has a monopoly on truth. In any case, no book can achieve anything unless it strikes a chord in its readers. The liberation movements of the Sixties had made *Animal Liberation* an obvious next step: the book drew the arguments together and gave them a coherent shape. The rest was done by some very fine, ethically concerned hard-working people—first a few individuals, then hundreds and now perhaps millions—who make up the Animal Liberation Movement. (Singer, 1990: viii)

In the period between the first and second editions of the book, the liberation movement in terms of abolishing cruel and unnecessary practices had made some significant gains. Harold Guither summarizes thus:

Two decades after *Animal Liberation* was published, animal activists can cite the move away from testing cosmetics on animals, a reduction in [the] number of animals used in laboratory experiments, and efforts in Europe to make livestock and poultry production less stressful. (Guither, 1998: 20)

He goes on to say that for Peter Singer particularly it was ‘important to see these reforms as stepping stones to further goals, not as the be-all and end-all of the campaign’ (Guither, 1998: 20). This view is no better exemplified than in the growth or passage of *Animal Liberation* itself, for the chapters concerning animal experimentation and factory farming, which can be seen as arenas of contestation, were updated with each edition. Singer writes:

By the time the first edition was a few years old, I began to hear people saying things like “Of course, animal welfare has improved a lot since that was written...”. I knew then that it was necessary to document the continuing suffering inflicted on animals in laboratories and farms, so as to present readers with descriptions that could not be palmed off as belonging to some distant dark age. (Singer, 1990: xviii)

Two grassroots level activists who have contributed significantly to the liberation movement are Ingrid Newkirk and Henry Spira (now deceased). Both have cited *Animal Liberation* as one of the primary motivators for their involvement. Newkirk credits Singer’s book with being the inspiration behind *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals* (PETA), a liberation organisation she co-founded in 1980 with Alex Pacheco, and which boasts a membership in the United States alone of over 750 000 (Singer, 2003). Spira spearheaded one of the first successful liberation campaigns in America, saving a number of cats from painful, pointless experiments conducted by researchers at the American Museum of Natural History in 1976 (Singer, 1998: 51-73). He went on to organise many more successful campaigns and founded the liberation group *Animal Rights International* (ARI) before his death in 1998. Regarding Singer’s work and the influence it had on him, Spira writes:

Singer made an enormous impression on me because his concern for other animals was rational and defensible in public debate. It did not depend on sentimentality, on the cuteness of the animals in question or their popularity as pets. To me he was saying simply that it is wrong to harm others, and as a matter of consistency we don’t limit who the others are; if they can tell the difference between pain and pleasure, then they have the fundamental right not to be harmed. (Spira, 1985: 196)

Singer himself participates in various liberation campaigns. For example, upon Henry Spira’s death he became the president of ARI and so active in their grassroots level activism (Singer, 2003: para. 6); but perhaps the campaign most notable for his involvement is the *Great Ape Project*, which he co-founded with Paola Cavalieri in 1993. The group, which includes primatologists, psychologists, and philosophers among its members, has called for the United Nations to adopt a *Declaration of the Rights of Great Apes*. Such a declaration would see moral equality extended to gorillas, orang-utans and chimpanzees in the form of the right to life, the protection of individual liberty and the prohibition of torture. The immediate benefits for apes are obvious, particularly for those held in captivity, for example, in research laboratories. The long-term benefits as Singer sees them are outlined in the preface to the second edition of *Animal Liberation*. He writes:

If it is successful in leading us to include, for the first time, members of a nonhuman species within the sphere of beings whom we recognize as having basic rights, The Great Ape Project will have served to bridge the gap between humans and other species. It will then make it more feasible to extend equal consideration to other nonhuman animals as well. (Singer, 1995: xvii)

Consistent with writing moral argument as a preferred form of activism, Singer, along with Cavalieri, edited a book in which he and other members provide their justifications for supporting the declaration and its implementation. The book entitled *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity* was first published in 1993, twenty years after the first publication of *Animal Liberation*.

In May 2003, the NYRB published Peter Singer's discussion of 'Animal Liberation at 30'. Thirty years had passed since the publication of his review-article, and in thirty years, he says, the situation has changed from 'scarcely anyone [thinking] that the treatment of individual animals raised an ethical issue worth taking seriously' to a worldwide advocacy movement of substantial membership (Singer, 2003). The early work of the IOG generally and Peter Singer's in particular and the people whose activism the work subsequently inspired, brought to light something that had been hidden. Harold Guither sums up thus:

The writings of philosophers and the actions of their converts have sparked innovative and controversial ethical standards for human relationships towards animals. Since the 1970s, their writings have activated the latent support of millions of citizens, stimulated new movements, driven the development of new organizations, and generated intense political activity. (Guither, 1998: 13).

In terms of the movement itself Richard Ryder suggests that it 'is possibly unique among liberation movements in the extent to which it has been led and inspired by professional philosophers; rarely has a cause', he says, 'been so rationally argued and so intellectually well armed' (Ryder, 2000: 6).

What problem does Singer name? What is its solution? What is animal liberation? While Singer's empirical chapters have been updated with each edition, the first chapter, which contains his arguments, has remained the same. Singer writes:

I have come across no insurmountable objections, nothing that has led me to think that the simple ethical arguments on which the book is based are anything but sound. (Singer, 1995: xviii-xix)

Unless otherwise indicated, the 'simple ethical arguments' as they appear in the first chapter of his book are the focus here rather than any further explanations Singer has since published in academic circles. They constitute the arguments as the general public read them, and so reflect the style of writing Singer thought most effective in the wider social context. Subsequent editions reflect this commitment for he changes little, despite the criticisms from peers in the philosophical community. To have changed the style, Singer says in a later edition, would have been to change the nature of the book itself, to turn it 'into a work of academic philosophy, of interest to my professional colleagues but tedious for the general reader' (Singer, 1995: xviii). One of his critics agrees. Regarding Singer's continued claims throughout the book that he has not merely asserted his views but argued their case, Bill Puka writes:

The fact that Singer must make mention of the fact that he has argued for his position demonstrates the degree to which his is a practical work, directed at a popular audience, for the purpose of social reform. (Puka, 1977: 557)

I turn now to the first chapter of *Animal Liberation* where in which Singer does not merely name the problem and its solution, but argues its case.

### *Naming the moral problem and its solution*

In chapter one of *Animal Liberation* Singer develops at least two ideas first broached by the IOG; they are: one, the connection between the exploitation of other races and their liberation from that exploitation to the exploitation/liberation of other animals, and two, 'speciesism', understood as a prejudice akin to racism or sexism which Singer claims underlies animal oppression. Richard Ryder first coined this latter term in his essay *Experiments on Animals*, published in the Godlovich's *Animals, Men and Morals* (1971). In it he writes:

In as much as both "race" and "species" are vague terms used in the classification of living creatures according, largely, to physical appearance, an analogy can be made between them. Discrimination on grounds of race, although most universally condoned two centuries ago, is now widely condemned. Similarly, it may come to pass that enlightened minds may one day abhor "speciesism" as much as they now detest "racism". The illogicality in both forms of prejudice is of an identical sort. If it is accepted as morally wrong to deliberately inflict suffering upon innocent human creatures, then it is only logical to also regard it as wrong to inflict suffering on innocent individuals of other species. (Ryder, 1971: 81)

Singer begins chapter one of *Animal Liberation* developing Ryder's position, but does so in a way reflecting his own philosophical commitments and interests.

In his satirical piece *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (1792), Cambridge philosopher Thomas Taylor parodied Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Singer makes use of Taylor's primary assertion to generate his discussion regarding animals. Taylor's general point was that Wollstonecraft's arguments for the rights of women also held for the rights of 'brutes' and in so doing were not to be taken seriously. Singer aptly describes Taylor's argument as follows:

If the argument for equality was sound when applied to women, why should it not be applied to dogs, cats, and horses? The reasoning seems 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. (Singer, 1975: 1)

Singer challenges Taylor's major claim that granting rights to animals is ridiculous and his argument runs as follows.

There is nothing absurd about the idea that the basic principle of equality applies to animals. The extension of the principle from one group to another does not imply that we must treat both groups in exactly the same way, or grant them exactly the same

rights. The principle does not require equal or identical treatment; instead what it requires is equal consideration. Different groups may require different treatment and different rights depending on the nature of their members. To clarify this point as it concerns the case for animals, Singer discusses the basis upon which opposition to racism or sexism ultimately rests (Singer, 1976: 2-3).

Racism and sexism are not wrong on the basis of factual equality, that is, equality does not depend on capacities or abilities that are scientifically discoverable, for example on intelligence, moral capacity, physical strength or similar matters of fact. Racism and sexism are wrong because equality is a moral idea: it is a prescription of how we should treat human beings rather than a description of an alleged actual equality among humans (Singer, 1976: 4-5).

The Utilitarian school of thought (and here Singer cites Jeremy Bentham's work) frames the principle in this way: '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' (Singer, 1976: 6). In other words, everyone's interests ought to be given equal consideration, and this includes animals because they indeed have interests. Put another way, according to the principle of equality, 'the taking into account of the interests of the being, whatever those interests may be, must...be extended to all beings, black, white, masculine or feminine, human or nonhuman' (Singer, 1976: 6).

The necessary and indeed sufficient condition that must be met in order to say that a being has interests and so the right to equal consideration is *the capacity for suffering*: this capacity is the 'prerequisite for having interests at all', and as such is a non-arbitrary capacity in the way that say the capacities for reasoning and language are arbitrary (Singer, 1976: 9). If a being can suffer, the principle of equal consideration of interests demands that that being's suffering be 'counted equally with the like suffering-in so far as rough comparisons can be made- of any other being' (Singer, 1976: 9). Sentience then, understood in the very basic sense of the capacity to suffer and/or experience enjoyment, is the marker by which concern for the interests of others is made (Singer, 1976: 9).

Those prejudiced toward the interests of members of their own species and against those members of other species are guilty of 'speciesism', just as those prejudiced toward the interests of members of their own race or sex and against those members of other races or sexes are guilty of racism and sexism respectively. It is on the basis of the principle of equal consideration of interests that 'speciesism', by analogy with racism and sexism, rests (Singer, 1976: 8-9).

Singer goes on to reject the argument that animals do not feel pain and so by extension are not deserving of equal consideration, and briefly discusses the wrongness of 'killing' as it concerns the application of the principle of equality, but for the purposes of this discussion there is enough here already to go on with. Importantly he claims that most human beings are speciesist, that we take an active part, or acquiesce in 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' (Singer, 1976: 10). The next two chapters of *Animal Liberation*, he says, represent examples of speciesism in practice. The first focuses on the practice of experimentation on animals and the second on the rearing of animals for food, two practices which cause more suffering in animals than any other. To stop them, says Singer, 'we must change the policies of our government, and we must change our own lives...' (Singer, 1976: 22-23). Continuing with the theme of experimentation as the primary focus or arena of contestation I will be taking a closer look at the content of chapter two in the next paper, but before I do, something need be said of the argument(s) thus far presented.

If liberation is the solution, what is the moral problem? Simply reading Singer's arguments suggests that the moral problem so named is speciesism: that is, human prejudice or bias towards the interests of our own species and against those of non-human animals. Reading beyond the first chapter the moral problem so named is a little more broadly conceived. When we read the factual chapters and look at the associated photographs what we are presented with is animal suffering and the collective practices that give rise to that suffering. Animal liberation understood in relation to these chapters is liberation from the suffering inflicted upon animals by humans and not simply from the human attitudes and biases upon which their oppression rests, that is, it is liberation from the *consequences* of speciesism. According to Singer, this is the most rational way of naming, understanding and seeking a solution. Individual knowers in terms of the anti-speciesist position come to know the principle of equal consideration of interests and through using this principle as their moral measure, come to decide the right course of action in any given circumstance involving the (ab)use of animals. Moreover, in knowing and applying these moral concepts, and in providing an objectively based moral justification for how people should act regardless of their social, political, historical and cultural locations, knowers seemingly come to avoid the charge of sentimentalism. In the original preface to *Animal Liberation* Singer asserts that:

[his book] exposes the prejudices that lie behind our present attitudes and behaviour. In the chapters that describe what these attitudes mean in practical terms-how animals suffer from the tyranny of human beings-there are passages that will arouse some emotion [but] nowhere in this book, however, do I appeal to the reader's emotions where they cannot be supported by reason...The ultimate justification for opposition...is not emotional. It is an appeal to basic moral principles which we all accept, and the application of these principles to the victims...is demanded by reason, not emotion. (Singer, 1976: ix-x)

In contrast to Singer's view, I suggest that 'Tools for Research', his second chapter in *Animal Liberation*, which focuses on the practice of animal experimentation, for example, need not be understood in terms of, or as an example of speciesism. There is an alternative way of understanding the persuasiveness of this chapter concerning animal experimentation that has little to do with an animal's *capacity* to suffer or the application on our part of basic moral principles that we may or may not all accept, and which is no more or no less rational than Singer's own arguments.

In exploring certain questions regarding political and social change concerning the treatment animals in Britain since the nineteenth century Hilda Kean writes:

...I want to implicitly reject the debate that has seemed to characterize so much recent academic writing on animals. I am not particularly concerned with the philosophical debate as to whether animals have rights or not, since this does not seem helpful in explaining adequately the nature of the historical practice of people in campaigning to protect animals. My concern is with the sort of treatment meted out to animals and the actions that women and men have taken to change this, often for the most contradictory and inconsistent of motives. (Kean, 1998: 11)

Kean does acknowledge that campaigners have been influenced to some extent by 'the ideas' of certain philosophers but she makes little reference to their work. It is one thing to reject a particular type of philosophical debate; yet another to reject all such debate, which she seems to do. It is unfortunate that she ignores Singer's work particularly on the grounds that it is simply focused on rights (or interests). Reading aspects of Singer's work in conjunction with that of Francis Power Cobbe specifically, whom Kean cites as an effective campaigner, does indeed provide insight into the practice of those who have participated in changing the lives of animals.

Drawing a line between the work of activists and the work of philosophers regarding the treatment of animals is not something unique to Kean. From the other side, philosophical debates concerning animal welfare do tend to ignore the work of activists in favour of the more theoretical discussions represented by Singer's first chapter in which he lays out his moral argument. For example, in his summary of ethics about animals, David De Grazia describes *Animal Liberation* as the book which gave discussions about the moral status of animals intellectual respectability. But he focuses his exposition and analysis on the moral arguments Singer presents to the exclusion of everything else. No mention is made of the 'factual chapters' and their moral persuasiveness, as if the chapters are simply an extension of the arguments (which is how Singer wants them read), and can be seen in no other way. I use De Grazia's work not to single him out, but to exemplify the standard approach in ethics about animals since Singer, and one that I will not be following here.

In order to explore this alternative understanding and maintain the sense of movement and process of enactment central to moral passages I resituate 'Tools for Research' within the larger historical context of activist literature and responses to that literature from scientists engaged in the practice. One way to do this is to draw attention to its similarities with the work of Frances Power Cobbe, Louise Lind af Hageby and Leisa Schartau. In the next paper I identify the similarities in strategies employed by these activists as well as the similarities in the criticisms of these strategies made by particular members of the scientific social world of physiology, and following this I take a closer look at issues raised by the debate drawing on something of Cora Diamond's work with which to do so.

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