

Business ethics



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An animal's place by Michael Pollan 2009 Word Count: 598 Singer offers a new model of relationships between humans and animals, spreading the principles of equality onto animals and recognizing their natural rights to life, freedom and happiness. By creating the term “speciesism” Singer points out that humans violate the principle of equality. Singer claims that we should take into consideration the interests of all living creatures, and disregarding of their nature, they should be equally satisfied for all humans and non-humans. He does not defend animals simply because he likes them – in fact, he believes that they have their own rights, and it is our obligation to respect these rights and act accordingly. Therefore, this approach, in contrast to good attitude to animals, makes human actions towards animals ethically grounded, disregarding each person's own attitude or feelings towards animals. Singer's position lacks sentiments and is well grounded using the principle of equality of rights. Having brains or consciousness is not a discriminatory factor for Singer, and it is quite clear for the scholar that we all have to take moral care of all animals and stop using their lives for our trivial goals.

2. Pollan's main point is that the basic problem of our society is industrial animal farming where animals are treated with disrespect and are caused a lot of suffering. His idea is to make the process of animal farming (including their slaughtering) “transparent” (figuratively or literally) – that is, allow animals to enjoy their lives and to slaughter them as mercifully as possible. This would make meat and dairy products more expensive of course, however humans would eat animals with respect and consciousness. Considering Singer's argumentation, Pollan agrees with quite a lot of arguments, yet questions some others, and this seems to happen because

according to Peter Singer, there are only two options for people eating meat: either to go vegetarian or to turn their heads away from the problem and close their eyes not seeing the animals suffering. That is why, the eventually discovered solution of farms “ transparency” looms for Pollan the perfect moral option which would, on the one hand, ensure that the animals are treated nicely, and on the other – that the humans will be able to make their choice of eating or not eating their flesh with more consciousness.

3. I would not say Pollan abandons utilitarianism totally but his position is certainly not concentrated on utility as the main measure for morality and the basic criteria for human behavior. Pollan agrees with Singer on the point that all living creatures deserve moral attitude for the reason that they have feelings and senses, and can suffer. However, he does not consider it necessary to maximally satisfy the interests of all creatures as such a position brings moral dilemmas. While utilitarianists might acknowledge the need for animal testing, they also admit the possibility of testing on retarded humans – and for Pollan this is unacceptable.

4. For me, Pollan’s arguments seem more reasonable. As much as I care about the animals and have respect for them, Singer’s views are a bit too radical. I agree with Singer on the points that animal testing, wearing fur or leather and using animals for fun (corrida and similar) should be banned. However, this is hardly possible that humans will all become vegetarians just like that, besides, I totally agree with Pollan that taming of the household animals was a sort of agreement concluded between animals and humans, and the conditions of this agreement were meant to bring benefits to both parties. To my mind, Pollan’s position is merciful to animals and not as radical as Singer’s.