

Sarah babineau

[Experience](#), [Meaning of Life](#)



Sarah Babineau Professor Roig HU 361 Commitment & Choice November 14, 2012

The Rights of Animals When we say that all human beings, referring to both men and women, whatever their race or sex may be are created equal, what is it that we are actually proclaiming? Peter Singer, writer of "All Animals are Equal" aims to advocate to us as readers to make the mental switch in respect to our attitudes toward a species other than our own. And by this I am referring to animals. R. G Frey takes on a very different position that he expresses in "Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Specieism." Although there is nothing in his work that has ever suggested that animals don't count, he disagrees with Singer, in a way, because he does not believe that animals possess moral standing. But first, I would like to discuss Singer's essay merely due to the fact that there may be a case for a new liberation movement. Singer "urges that we extend to other species the basic principle of equality that most of us recognize should be extended to all members of our own species (pg. 171)." Many may note or make the connection that the idea of "the rights of animals" is somewhat of a parody to the case for women's rights. But some may argue that the case for equality between men and women cannot validly be extended to non-human animals because, for an example, and realistically speaking, women now have the right to vote because they are just as capable of making that decision like men are, whereas animals on the other hand are incapable of understanding the significance of voting so they cannot have that right. Which then brings me back to, what exactly are we declaring when we say all human beings are equal? Because as we know it, we must face the fact that humans come in different shapes and sizes. We each have different

moral capacities, different intellectual abilities, different amounts of feeling and sensitivity to others, different abilities to communicate, and different capacities to experience pleasure and pain- all of which are examples Singer discusses. And as a result, if the demand for equality were merely based on the actual equality of human beings, we would have to stop demanding it. “ It would be an unjustifiable demand. (pg. 173)” states Singer. It is unjustifiable to discriminate on the basis of age, sex, or gender because neither of those are a guide to a person’s ability. Singer proposes another important reason as to why we ought not to base our opposition on any kind of factual equality because, “ we can have no guarantee that these abilities and capacities really are distributed evenly, without regard to race or sex, among human beings (pg. 173). ” The most important thing we must consider is that equality is a moral ideal, not a simple assertion of fact. “ 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 animals (pg. 174). ” I strongly agree with Singer here; animals have the capacity to experience pain and suffering just as humans do. Therefore the interests of every being that is being affected by an action should be taken into account and given the same weight as the interests of any other beings, such as animals. At this point, Singer expresses animal testing as what should be a major concern in our society. Singer states that it is simple discrimination. He uses an orphaned human infant for comparison, by suggesting that if the experimenter is not prepared to use this human over his readiness to use a nonhuman being, it is simply a form of discrimination. As far as we can tell, an animal is just as sensitive to pain and any human

infant. " Experimenting on animals, and eating their flesh, are perhaps the two major forms of specieism in our society (pg. 176). " Animals have emotions and desires that allow them to live a good life whether we think so or not. And to that respect, the distinction between humans and animals will be a continuum in which we will move gradually. Frey, on the other hand, has a very different standing on this issue compared to Singer. Frey focuses his essay on the comparative value of human and animal life, taking the notion of autonomy to be central to this issue since autonomy is the source of a huge part of the value of one's life. ' Thus, I [Singer] am a restricted vivisectionist, not because I think animals are outside the moral community but because of views I hold about the value of their lives (pg. 193). " The three propositions Frey mentions in his essay are that animal life has some value, not all animal life has the same value, and lastly, human life is more valuable than animal life. Frey calls this claim of the comparative value between human and animal life the unequal value thesis. The unequal value thesis expresses why the value of humans is of more importance than the value of animals. What is missing is the potentiality for enrichment, because lives of less richness have less value. Autonomy plays a vast part of the human case, because by exercising our autonomy one can mold their life to fit the conception our society portrays of what is perceived to be living " the good life. " " Thus, by exercising our autonomy and trying to live out some conception of how we want to live, we make possible further, important dimensions of value to our lives (pg. 196). " Although Frey does mention that not all members of the moral community have lives of equal value. In fact, some human lives fall drastically below the quality of normal human life,

which would conclude that in some cases a perfectly healthy animal can have a higher quality of life than that of some human, such as ones with mental disabilities for example. But Frey addresses to his readers that the way in which we defend this thesis is a vitally important affair. To discuss the issue of using animals in scientific research as Singer did, he remains a vivisectionist because of the benefits medical and scientific research can present. And it is the unequal value thesis that justifies the use of animals in medical and scientific research. Frey believes that the unequal value thesis is in fact defensible. In conclusion, Frey stresses again that the argument of his essay is not to present animals of having no value, but rather about whether they have lives of equal value to normal human life. Overall, both writers express that animals for in fact have some value to their lives, whether we believe it to be of equal value to humans or of less value is based purely on our moral principles. Works Cited: Lafollette, Hugh, ed. *Ethics in Practice*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Print Frey, R. G. "Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism." Lafollette 192-204. Singer, Peter. "All Animals Are Equal." Lafollette 171-180.