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In his book *Animal Rights and Human Obligations* Peter Singer makes some interesting arguments concerning the issue of animal rights.

His main argument is that just as we, as a society, have learned that all people are equal, regardless of skin color or gender, we need to learn that all animals are equal, regardless of species.

Because this assertion may, at first encounter, seem absurd, he quickly clarifies what he means by it. Singer does not suggest that all other animals have exactly the same rights as people have. He uses the example of men and women:

“ Many feminists hold that women have the right to an abortion on request. It does not follow that since these same people are campaigning for equality between men and women they must support the right of men to have abortions too. Since a man cannot have an abortion, it is meaningless to talk of his right to have one. Since a pig can't vote, it is meaningless to talk of its right to vote.” (149)

What Singer does believe is that all animals have a right to what he refers to as equality of consideration. He asserts that the physical and emotional needs of a dog, for example, should receive equal consideration to the needs of a human.

The results of that consideration will vary according to the nature of the animal in question, just as our treatment of humans varies according to the needs, abilities and preferences of the individuals in question.

He rests his argument on four principles that have already been established by previous equal-rights movements, and have generally become accepted

as fact in human society. He reminds us that it is not acceptable to discriminate on the basis of a trait that is integral to one's existence or identity, such as ethnicity or gender.

Neither is it okay to discriminate on the basis of anatomical differences. It is also not acceptable to discriminate on the basis of a deficiency, such as physical disability or lack of intelligence. Lastly, we must not cause others to suffer just so we can satisfy our tastes or increase our standard of living.

He goes on to make three further arguments, which can also be seen as three facets of the main argument: that we should not eat meat, that we should not perform experiments on animals which we would not be willing to perform on humans, and that contemporary philosophy should not continue treating the needs of humans as though they are more important than the needs of animals.

He rests his argument against eating meat on three premises. He asserts that meat does not provide any benefit except pleasure. He implies that the act of eating meat itself (or perhaps the act of killing animals) causes animals to suffer. And he points out that meat animals are treated inhumanely because that is more profitable for the meat industry.

His conclusion is that eating meat causes other creatures to suffer for nothing more than our pleasure, and, therefore, is morally wrong.

Singer bases his argument against animal testing on two generally-accepted facts. The first is that non-human test subjects such as apes, cats and mice are just as aware of what is happening to them, more self-directing and at least as capable of feeling pain as an infant human subject would be.

The second is that we consider it unthinkable to perform the same

experiments on a human (even an infant, who possesses neither higher intelligence nor much in the way of physical functionality) as we regularly perform on non-humans.

The last of Singer's three further arguments is that contemporary philosophy, as a field, should end the practice of discriminating against non-human animals. He reasons that the chief task of philosophy is " Thinking through, critically and carefully, what most people take for granted." (153).

Singer supports all four sections of his argument with fairly-straightforward premises, which are entirely deductive in nature.

For his main argument, all his premises are basic moral elements that are generally accepted by the vast majority of human society. But, in my opinion, the conclusion does not automatically follow from the premises, because other factors exist, which Singer fails to mention.

For his argument against animal testing, he uses two premises that are both true. But just as with his main argument, there are other facts that bear on the issue, and Singer does not mention them. So his thinking is incomplete, and, therefore, results in a false conclusion.

His argument regarding philosophy would logically be true if his main argument were true, but, in reality, the opposite is the case.

The main factor that Singer fails to consider in his main argument is love.

Most animals are not loved as humans are loved, nor would anyone benefit if they were.

There is a ban on whaling for a reason: not only are whales near extinction, but they travel in pods and demonstrate a highly intelligent, strong affection

for each other. We do not eat or experiment on pets because they are loved by their humans.

Perhaps the argument could be validly made that we should curtail experiments on chimpanzees to only what is truly necessary. After all, our closest genetic cousins do seem to share a strong bond between mothers and their young.

But even an adult chimpanzee is not loved in the way, in a healthy society, a human is loved for its whole life. Since being loved is arguably the single thing that differentiates the "good life" (Brandt 19) from a dreary existence, the potential for love creates the critical divide between humans and animals.

My conclusion is this: Animals do have rights, and we are obliged to respect them. We should enact sweeping reforms in our treatment of animals. But non-humans are not and cannot be equal to humans.

In regards to eating meat, it is not true that soy and other vegetarian sources provide all the nutrition the human body needs (Dong & Scott 209-216).

Eating animals does not cause them suffering, and neither does killing them. They do not know that they will be eaten, and, certainly, after they are dead, they know nothing at all. Not eating them, on the other hand, causes them inexcusable suffering by upsetting the natural cycle that is the basis for all life on Earth.

The mistreatment of animals that are intended for the table is an irrelevant argument. Yes, it is wrong and needs to be corrected. Corporate greed is a problem of epidemic proportions in modern times and causes much

suffering, not only in the meat industry and not only to animals.

But to say that we should not eat meat because meat animals are mistreated makes no more sense than to say that we should not wear clothing because sweatshops exist. Instead, whenever possible, we should buy meat from small, local farmers who raise and slaughter their animals using humane methods that we can verify.

If we do not test on animals, we will be constrained to test on people. Either we will have to subject humans to the very same treatment that Singer says is unacceptable for animals (and that would be going backwards), or we will have to let the products go to market with no testing on live subjects at all. Then thousands of consumers will take the risk instead of a small number of animals. The economic impact alone would cause untold suffering.

In regards to contemporary philosophy, I believe that since Singer's main argument is false, then, of course, philosophy should not support it.

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