

Flaws of peter singer's arguments essay



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James Perlas Rhet 130 First Draft Final Paper In this essay, I'd like to argue against the general movement concerning animal rights. This movement aims to give animals more rights than is necessary. One of the main people who advocate this movement is Peter Singer. Singer uses many logical arguments that are reasoned and well thought out but are flawed and it will be very useful to show how the animal liberation movement is misguided and unrealistic. Peter Singer makes his first point in arguing how humans are animals just as much as cats and rabbits are.

He states how the using the term of ' animal' refers to non-human animals which include cats, dogs, and even insects. Singer says that there is a slight distinction between animals and humans and that there is no reason to give one more moral weight to the ' interests' of one to another. He uses the example of racial and sexual discrimination to compare the situation. Singer says that even though colors of people and gender can be different in many ways, whether it's genetically or environmentally, they still need to have their ' interests' considered equally.

He defines having ' interests' as having the ability to experience suffering and enjoyment. In applying moral principles, Singer uses the reasoning that any being that is given moral status, must have that same moral status applied to every other being. With this in mind, he uses it to justify all genders and races to have equal political and moral rights. There's nothing wrong with his argument until he says that since there's no difference between humans and animals, and since there's no discrimination between blacks and whites that they should not be exempt from being equal.

Singer says that it is necessary for a being to have interest to be able to qualify for moral status. He uses a stone as an example of something without interests which therefore does not qualify for moral status. Since it has no awareness or reaction to its surroundings and is incapable of suffering and enjoyment, it has no interests. Singer argues that animals do have interest: they live to keep themselves alive, reproduce, feel pain, and have the capacity to suffer. He goes on to say that if animals have moral status then they also deserve equal moral status as humans and to have equal consideration of their interest. He starts his argument with justifying how animals have the capacity of suffering. He uses many sources such as scientific findings to show how animals do in fact feel pain similar to humans. This is already common knowledge because take the nervous system of a monkey for example; it is very similar to our own, especially the parts that deal with the reaction to something such as fire and heat. However, it is important to understand that pain is a simple reaction to something.

The heat from the fire causes a reaction within the nerve which sends signals to the brain which translates it to pain. This event happens in every living thing. It isn't limited to just animals with wings or to just dogs, but rather it happens in all of them. Reaction to an external change is a basic neural process. Taking away a food source from any living thing will cause it to react to the change by finding other sources of food. Moving a plant from exposure to the sun and placing it in the shade will affect the plant's growth by causing it to grow in a new direction towards the light.

Pulling a leaf off the plant will cause it to invest more energy into replacing the leaves with more. Singer continues by saying that the pain humans feel

can be more complex and he uses an example of fear. When there's a killer on the loose, the intense fear people experience is due to the complicated social relationships that people have built up in society. Bearing this in mind, Singer says that just because animals have less complicated suffering doesn't mean they deserve any less consideration just like an infant must be given the same consideration as an adult.

His logic goes like this: all living things react to their environment. The reaction towards the change is called pain and this means that plants, animals, and humans feel pain. Anything that has the capacity to feel pain also needs to have its interests considered. Since that living thing needs to have its interests considered, then it also deserves equal consideration of its 'interests' by every other being that also have their interests considered. Therefore, the interests of plants and animals deserve equal consideration to the interests of humans.

Peter Singer's argument that a reaction towards change would be defined as pain is a mere assumption on his part. Man reacts to a dark environment by creating a light source. This is a reaction towards a change but it isn't necessarily considered pain. Also, a plant that grows in a new direction towards wherever the light sources moves to wouldn't be called pain either. One of the main problems Singer argues for is when he says that all animals deserve to have their interests considered. This includes cats, butterflies, ants, and even worms.

By cutting a worm in half, the worm reacts by splitting into two worms and moving away from whatever cut it in the first place. Singer would argue that

the worm would be suffering even though it's a simple kind of suffering in comparison to how we would feel if we were cut in half and even though the neural process that occurs with the worm is more basic than ours, the worm is still experiencing something which qualifies as suffering. Singer says that we don't need to see the worm crying for help or biting back because we already understand the process of feeling pain.

This means that worms have the capacity for suffering. If one cuts a plant, the reaction isn't much different from that of a worm. It's not going to try to get away but by pulling leaves off one part of a plant, it will then respond by growing in a different direction. It's how things evolve. The organisms that can move away from things that attack them are more likely to live longer and pass on their genes to younger generations. If the worm's reaction means that it's suffering, then so does the plant's.

There isn't necessarily a problem with equal consideration of interests. It is after all the basis of civil rights movements against racial and gender discrimination. The problem is how Peter Singer uses this equal consideration to extend to any being that has the capacity to suffer. It is true that every living thing has interests: requirements for somewhere to live, being able to reproduce, and protecting offspring. However, it is impossible and impractical to give equal consideration to all of these interests. Suppose a situation when a house is infested with ants.

The family there can't share the home with millions of insects, but Singer would say that the interests of the ant colony should be considered just as much as that of the family. Though one way to consider the interest of the

ant colony is for the family to move to another house; which would be a smaller inconvenience than what the ants would have to suffer from exterminators. However, we can't live in a world where we let our cities overrun by mice or cockroaches for the reason of not disregarding the interest of other living things.

Humans and animals are natural competitors for the same space and the natural resources. It's impossible to negotiate with rats; it's either them or us. The choices that we have are having a house or factory and kill the animals when come in or let them take over wherever they feel like. Either we give no consideration to anyone and have no value in life, or we find another reason for giving consideration to the interests of other beings. Since we aren't going to go for the first option, where is the line drawn? How do we decide which living things get their life and freedom and which ones get served into the main dish?

The answer to the question has been determined a few million years back in the tribes of our ancestors. Whatever the problem with these early societies; be it biting each other's faces off or clubbing another to death, their brains were able to recognize the first step in building a society which is strength in numbers. They said I won't kill you or your family if you don't kill mine. This wasn't because they were aware of a universal right to life that everyone had. It was because it was in their intrinsic nature to know this.

Humans wouldn't have lasted long if we went around killing each other, so humans and some animals eventually looked out for each other to survive. This wasn't done by sitting around and working out the ethics of hunting or

by making a law that everyone had to follow, it was the way our minds and society evolved throughout the years. Though there were always those isolated cases when a few members of society killed other members of the tribe for taking their food, society has reached a point where these kinds of people were cast out by being stoned to death or exiled to ensure the safety of the tribe as a whole.

After a few hundreds of thousands of years later, everyone's got used to the idea of not killing each other and punishing those who do that we think people shouldn't kill each other and people have the right to life. We didn't reach this conclusion from realizing at one point some timeless truth; we simply got into this habit and grew to a stable growing society because of it. Humans learn to look out for each other and we learn to see if others are in trouble: we hear them crying out in pain or waving their hands to signal someone to help them. We can call this feeling compassion.

This emotional response must have been a very strong drive especially when it involves one to save their child from a lion or fighting off another tribe in the village back then. However, in modern times, we are fortunate enough that we aren't in that intense situation as frequent, if any at all. The drive is still inherent in our nature though and it takes hundreds of years for a drive such as compassion to decrease significantly. It isn't surprising that when people see other animals in distress, particularly dogs or other such pets that humans can relate to, that they feel the need to help them.

This desire begins with animals like dogs because they were nearly a part of the tribe by helping with catching other animals and hunting. In today's

society, this desire goes to other animals and we have Peter Singer saying that everyone has a duty to minimize the suffering all beings endure; whether it's an animal or human. If this is how the whole movement with animal rights started, then I will argue that there is no rational reason to hold these beliefs.

Just because we humans give each other the right to live to help continue our survival, it does not mean that we must give the same right to animals. If you put a person in a lion's den, it is most likely that the lion will show no mercy towards him. There isn't any logical reason to give animals any rights at all because it is not mutual. I will argue that none of us have natural rights because they are given to us by our tribe or society. Any desire to help animals that would eat us alive if given the chance is our minds making irrational decisions just because we see some human attributes in them.

Singer talks about situations of infants and retarded adults as an example of humans that can't think rationally and are less intelligent than some animals. He uses these examples as a justification that the line that decides what living being is of moral worth should not be based on intelligence that makes us seem like the 'better' animal. Though he is not wrong in saying that there are some animals that would make a better contribution to society than some humans who are incapable to make rational choices and unable to function as part of society.

Why should we give a murderer the chance to live if he will kill anyone if given the chance? The same reason that Peter Singer gives for not giving moral worth to individuals based on different qualities such as skin color,

gender, or intelligence. In society, there will always be something different between individuals, but one can't just pick and choose who has rights and who doesn't in society because that can lead to racism and sexism. Singer says that the only way to determine whether or not a living being has moral worth is if they can suffer.

However, this ideology leads to giving rights to flowers or other plants. I believe the only way to fully include all the beings that, as a society, it is in the interest of our survival to protect, is to look at the undeniable and permanent thing that we as a race share together which is species. The line must be drawn somewhere and that's where it has always been drawn from 5 million years back all the way through today's time. We have looked out for each other since the beginning mainly because they would do the same for us.

The tribes from our ancestors have grown to become nation states and even nation states have formed their own 'tribes' such as the USA, United Kingdom, NATO, and even the United Nations. We have become a union of tribes and our instincts extend to other countries with people who speak a different language because the concept of what it means to be a tribe has grown extensively. We never joined with a pack of wolves or a tribe of monkeys because of the reason that they are animals; a different species. They are irrational and can't be communicated with on a serious level.

They have no problem with attacking human beings whenever given a chance. Though there are some cases: when a gorilla can count to ten and ask for food, or a dog being trained to fetch a stick, it doesn't matter how

smart an ape can be because it is an animal. These are simply isolated incidents on what an animal is in the same way that a psychopathic killer is an isolated case of what it is to be human. Animal rights should only refer to preventing inhumane treatment against animals instead of taking it out of proportion and giving them the same right to life as humans.