

# Michael pollan on peter singer

Profession, Singers



In his article published in the New York Times, Michael Pollan interprets Peter Singer's thoughts as those of an ardent defender of animal rights, especially with regard to those slaughtered for meat.

According to Pollan, Singer looks at the moral obligation of treating people with equal capabilities and uses it in the context of the relationship between people and animals. Singer's argument is not to give animals equal rights with people per se, but at least consider their rights where they both share interest.

Because avoiding pain is a behavior associated with both humans and animals, animals should be given moral consideration on those grounds. Singer's arguments, according to Pollan, have led to the conversion of thousands of people into vegetarians. Singer is therefore depicted as strong animal rights crusader.

Pollan defends the meat eating culture in a number of ways. First, he believes that animals have the habit of eating each other all the time, and therefore human beings are justified to eat them. The problem with this argument is that animals kill in order to survive. Human beings, on the other hand, do not have to kill to survive.

His second argument on why human beings should kill animals is based on domestication of animals. His position is that farm animals would be worse off if they lived in the wild. However, domestication is driven by a demand, and that is the reason why domesticated animals exist.

Indeed, animal rightists believe that if there were no domesticated animals, there would be no suffering for them. Pollan finally accepts that animal

suffering is a legitimate problem, but expresses the need to solve human problems first. Again, this perspective puts animals at a disadvantage because they cannot participate in any moral decision making process.

Pollan appears to embrace utilitarianism on the grounds that humans owe animals that can feel pain moral consideration, and this justifies why they should be eaten. Pollan concludes that industrialization has led to the loss of human feelings, which he refers as dehumanization. Specifically, he points out that America raises and slaughters animals in a brutal manner more than any other country.

However, he insists that there is some kind of protectionism, whereby a variety of key players lack adequate information on the real status of the meat industry in America. If this information were to become available, the meat industry would undergo an overnight transformation, with meat becoming more expensive.

People will eat meat while giving the animals the respect they deserve. Pollan does not call for total abolishment of the places where animals are slaughtered, but rather advocates for a more humane way of growing and slaughtering them.

Pollan's argument appears more rational because his case is argued from a holistic perspective, taking views from both animal rightists and meat crusaders. His final stand is based on an analysis of the interests of both the animal rightists and meat crusaders, while that of singer appears to strictly consider animal rights only. Meat eating has featured in the diet of human beings for a long time.

The hunter-gatherer societies and the early man both exploited meat, not for luxury but for subsistence. The idea of animal farming is to sustain the meat industry without compromising the availability of meat in the future. This, however, should be done in the most humane way. For example, animals should be allocated sufficient space for exercise while they are being grown. They should also be slaughtered in such a manner that they should encounter least pain.

## References

Pollan, M. (2002). An Animals Place. The New York Times magazine. Retrieved from <http://michaelpollan.com/article.php?id=55> on 9th April 2009