**INSPIRATIONBASE**

*A collection of ethical leadership speeches*

Peter

Singer

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Peter Singer is an Australian moral and political philosopher who is a key figure in the modern animal rights movement, and is best known for his influential 1975 book *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*, in whichhe introduced the concept of speciesism invented by the British psychologist Richard Ryder to a broad audience. Singer is also very well known for his research in bioethics, and has devoted a lot of his time and income to environmentalism, famine, poverty, and reproductive rights. Some of his viewpoints, such as infanticide or euthanasia, have stirred great controversy. He considers himself a utilitarian, has published numerous books and articles, and has taught in England, Australia, and the United States. Since 1999, he has been Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University. (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Peter-Singer>)

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| **PS 1*. Should We All Be Vegan? / Interview with Peter Singer*** | | | |  |
| Your question about slavery: I’m, of course, not saying that there’s a a perfect analogy that what we do to animals is identical to what the European slave traders and slave owners did to slaves. But I do think that the analogy is a helpful one. I think it helps us to see a number of different things. The most important analogy is that you have a powerful group; a group that is able to dominate and enslave others, and I do think we enslave animals by the billions in fact. That is able to do that, and then generates an ideology to justify what it’s doing.  […] I think we need to be more honest about ourselves, and not only to be honest and transparent, but actually to change what we’re doing so that we treat all beings on this planet in a way that is commensurate with their needs and their interests. | | | | |
| **Date** | 2/3/21  Accessed 2 Apr. 2021 | **Source** | Novara Media on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mg8KyJ7NEYY>), min. 4:47 - 5:31, 7:20 - 7:35; close captioning available. | |

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| PS 2. *Peter Singer: Philosophy, controversy, and the importance of free speech* | | | |  |
| […] [P]hilosophy […] has a long history of causing offense. That tradition goes back to Socrates in ancient Athens. The Oracle of Delphi said Socrates was the wisest person. That puzzled Socrates, because he realized that there were so many things he didn’t know. And then he thought about it and talked to people about it, and he realized that he was the wisest person, because he knew that there were so many things that he didn’t know, whereas all of the other people thought that they knew everything, or that they knew a great deal when, in fact, they didn’t. So Socrates spent a lot of time demonstrating to his fellow Athenians how little they knew; that they didn’t, for example, understand a basic moral concept like justice, which is the subject of the Republic. And in pushing them to examine their ignorance, exposing their ignorance, he undoubtedly offended many of them. And for this, perhaps for this, I’m not a historian, but perhaps anyway, we do know that he was condemned to death by drinking hemlock, so perhaps he paid the price for offending his fellow Athenians, making himself unpopular. But I think we philosophers ought to accept that this is part of our tradition, that we want to challenge people , that we wanna show people that they don’t know as much as they think that they know, and we wanna challenge them to examine their life, we wanna ask them if they’re living an ethical life, and that can also be an offensive question if we have a line of argument that suggests that perhaps they’re not. And if we’re to do that, do our job properly, then we need a license to cause offense. Still, you might say there have to be some limits to free speech  […] And many countries in Europe, many European countries, my own native country of Australia, do have laws against racial vilification or incitement to racial hatred. It’s more difficult here because of the First Amendment and its interpretation by the Supreme Court. But I think such laws can be justified, provided we interpret incitement to racial hatred or racial vilification narrowly, not in terms of the content of what is said so much as in terms of whether it is an incitement to hatred, which is attempting to arouse emotions, arouse hostile emotions in people towards a racial or ethnic group. So hatred is an emotion to try to arouse those hostile emotions seems to me to go beyond the bands of protected speech because it’s not really an expression of ideas which might appeal to our intellect but an appeal to our emotions.  […] Obviously, I think philosophy is a great major to take. Not only because of the particular content, but it is something that helps you think, and I think that’s really important. But you have to think about your own abilities and what you’re going to enjoy taking, and I think that’s also important, and, you know, there’s a whole lot of things that are useful and valuable, and I’m not gonna put down some rather than others. I’ve been interested in the areas like development and global poverty and overcoming that, so working in that area is important. Working on things like international relations to produce peace and a better world is also important. You know, biomedical stuff is important because you can go do research that can find ways of reducing the burden of disease. I think all of those issues are really important. | | | | |
| **Date** | 5/12/17  Accessed 2 Apr. 2021 | **Source** | WellesleyCollege on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7z6eQ_4s20>), min. 28:20 - 30:26, 32:06 - 33:10, 1:19:53 - 1:20:46; close captioning available. | |

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| **PS 3*. 3 ethical catastrophes you can help stop, right now / Big Think*** | | | |  |
| Great philosophers have tried to understand the world we’re living in, and have tried to think about how we ought to live. And I think these are really fundamentally important questions that any rational being ought to be interested in trying to find the answers to. What are the fundamental principles about how we ought to act? Ought we to be looking at moral rules that we ought never to violate? Ought we to be trying to work out what rights beings have? Should we be looking at the consequences of our actions and use that as the ultimate criterion for deciding what’s right and wrong? These questions are still questions we face today. They have no scientific answer. They’re not about the Nature of the universe in that way. They’re about how we ought to live, which is a different type of question. And so I think it’s particularly relevant to look at what philosophy and what philosophical discussions have contributed to our reflection and our thought about how we ought to live. So my top three current ethical issues would be global poverty; climate change, which is clearly related to global poverty; and the way we treat animals, which I think is a hugely neglected issue that affects tens of billions of animals every year. I think a question that you might use to shape your thinking around the issue of global poverty would be: what ought I be doing to contribute to helping people in extreme poverty?  […] So you have money to spare after providing for all your basic needs and making some provision for the future. You spend money on luxuries that you don’t need, if it ranges from buying a bottle of water when you could drink water that comes out of the tap and is free, or maybe it’s taking vacations or buying clothes when you’ve got plenty of clothes to keep you warm and decent. So if you’re in that situation, then you can ask yourself: what ought I to be doing to consider myself an ethical person? Is it okay for me just to be living my life in my society and not doing anything for people who, through no fault of their own, are living in extreme poverty. And if the answer to that is no, then you need to think about it, “Well, what should I be doing? How much should I be doing?” With regard to climate change, perhaps the most pressing question is: what can I do about this situation?  […] We can each contribute by trying to reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions, reducing activities that use fossil fuels and release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. We all know about that. Perhaps riding a bike rather than driving a car, or walking more, or using public transport. Those kinds of things help. Not having your air conditioning on too low, too cool when you don’t need to, and so on. But also, we need to think, and people are now thinking more about what we ought to be eating, because meat is a major contributor to climate change, and so that’s led a lot of people to become vegan, or to become reducitarian, to reduce the amount of meat they’re eating, so they’re only eating meat, say, two days a week rather than seven. And all of those things can help. But it’s still true that it’s a bigger problem that I don’t think will be solved by the action of individuals, so we need to act politically. We need to come together and put as much pressure as we can on our political leaders to take serious steps about this. The most basic question that you can think about with regard to animals is: what should the moral status of animals be? What is it now? I think we all know that. Essentially, animals are things. Legally, we own animals; they’re property. The farmer owns the animals he or she raises. The laboratory, the corporation running the laboratory, owns the animals that they’re using to test on. The fur farmer owns those animals. And they don’t really have rights of their own. They don’t have a moral status that says it’s wrong to lock them up in small cages, it’s wrong to raise them by whatever method will produce their flesh or their eggs or their milk most cheaply for humans to consume, or to perform painful experiments on them, or to slaughter them for fur. They don’t have that moral status. And so the first question is: is that wrong? And I believe it is wrong. I think we’re guilty of speciesism, which is the analogy at the species level of racism at the race level, and sexism at the level of relations between men and women. And just as we’re trying to move past those long-lasting traditional prejudices against some races and against women, so it’s time for us to move past the prejudice against beings who are not members of the species Homo sapiens, and to say, “If they can feel, if their lives can go well or badly, then we ought not to be ignoring those interests. We ought not to be sacrificing their interests just for our convenience or just to get animal products that we eat a little bit more cheaply. And then, after that, you need to think about: should I be participating in these industries at all? Am I complicit in the suffering that’s being inflicted on animals, especially factory farms, but in other forms of farming as well? Am I complicit in that when I buy those products? And if so, does that mean that I need to stop buying them? That I need to move away from a lifestyle that consumes animal products and move closer to a vegan lifestyle, or move all the way to a vegan lifestyle, if you can do that, which will mean that I’m no longer supporting these industries that are based on the cruel exploitation of animals? And, of course, will also mean that I’m contributing less to climate change. | | | | |
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Collected by Daniela Ribitsch