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## COK Talks with Peter Singer

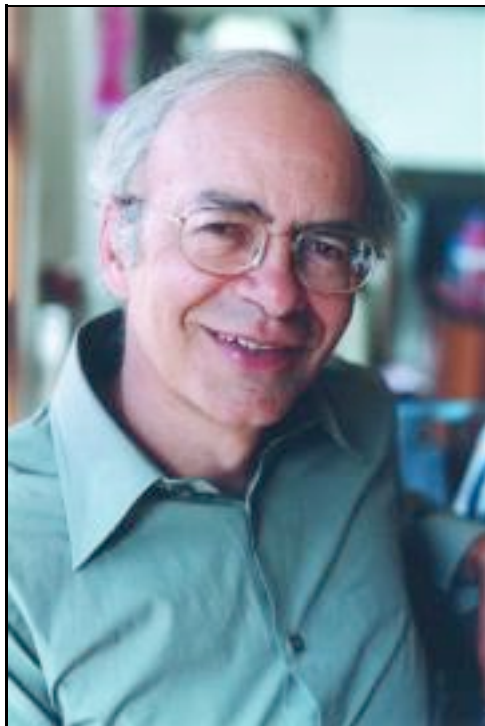


Photo by Marion Singer

Regrettably, they want to buy meat and so more animals are killed. In Europe, I'd say that the intensity of animal suffering has lessened, slightly, because of better regulations both for farm animals and for animals used in research. And the prospect there is for further improvements, which is encouraging. (See *Outlawed in Europe*, [ari-online.org](http://ari-online.org).) I hope that the rest of the world will follow Europe's example. But it's going to take time, unfortunately.

### 2. In your opinion, what has been the most important victory for the animal movement?

In the last 30 years, I'd put at the top Henry Spira's successful campaign to stop experiments on cats at the American Museum of Natural History. Why? Simply because it was the first time in a century of campaigning against the use of animals in research that the pro-animal side had ever actually stopped a series of experiments. That victory paved the way for other, larger victories, which had an impact on far more animals.

But I'd also put the recent referendum victory on sow crates [gestation crates] in Florida very near the top, because that was the first time that a major form of factory farming has been banned in any state in America, and it showed that the public is on our side, when they have a chance to vote on the kind of confinement that is standard in factory farms.

### 3. What do you see as the greatest weakness and the greatest strength of the U.S. animal movement?

Weakness: We are divided into too many groups and don't work well together. But we're starting to learn how to overcome that. Strength: When the facts are fairly presented to the public, they support us. That's why the factory farmers never let TV cameras in. They know that the public would be shocked by the way they treat animals.

### 4. In terms of resource allocation, how much of the movement's attention should be focused on farmed animal issues?

Most of it. That's where most of the animals are, and where most of the suffering is.

### 5. In your opinion, what will it take to see a significant increase in the rate of vegetarianism in the United States?

Many things could do it. Spreading information about what happens to animals before they end up on your plate—and why it isn't necessary to participate in this cruelty—will surely help. Perhaps there will be a technological breakthrough, like the ability to reproduce, from individual cells, something that is an exact biochemical replica of meat but cheaper and free of problems like salmonella. Of course, some people will say that such a product wouldn't be truly vegetarian, but if it doesn't involve the suffering or death of animals, I'd welcome it.

### 6. What advice would you offer to animal activists today, in terms of maximizing our effectiveness?

I've written about that in *Ethics into Action: Henry Spira and the Animal Rights Movement*. Henry Spira, who in my opinion was the most effective activist the modern American animal movement has known, gave a lot of thought to how to be effective. It's a matter of picking the right issue, one that is winnable, and yet will lead to further progress for animals. Then you have to go about it in the right way, not in a hostile, aggressive manner, but in a way that can persuade your opponents to change their behavior. And once you've chosen the target, try to build a coalition with other groups. We are more powerful when we work together.

Regarded as the "father of the modern animal movement," Princeton philosophy professor and world-renowned ethicist Peter Singer has challenged our attitudes towards and treatment of nonhuman animals for nearly 30 years. The author of such important works as *How Are We to Live: Ethics in an Age of Self Interest*, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*, *Animal Factories* with Jim Mason, *Practical Ethics*, and, of course, *Animal Liberation*, amongst many others, Peter Singer's writings have inspired countless individuals into action for the liberation of animals.

### 1. Since you first wrote *Animal Liberation* in 1975, the number of animals killed has increased dramatically. Why do you think this is and do you see the total amount of animal suffering reducing any time soon?

Certainly the number of animals killed has increased, because there are far more people able to afford to buy meat, especially in Asia.

"When the facts are fairly presented to the public, they support us. That's why the factory farmers never let TV cameras in. They know that the public would be shocked by the way they treat animals."

