By Elliot Temple, Nov 2019

https://curi.us/2240-discussion-tree-state-of-animal-rights-debate

- Peter Singer in Animal Liberation, paraphrasing: Judge whether animals should be treated morally by suffering not rationality.
  - PS: Yelping is inconclusive.
    - PS: People yelp and we're convinced they suffer, so we should accept the same evidence for animals.
      - ET: The claim people *do* judge a particular way – asserted with no evidence or arguments – is inadequate to conclude they *should*. I think we have better reasoning for judging our fellow men. Or maybe we should be solipsists or something else. PS's position isn't good enough.
  - PS: Is language required for suffering?
    - PS: [PS gives arguments for no.]
    - ET: I also say no.
  - ET: Are brains computers and nothing more than computers? Is dualism true? Should we be analyzing suffering or intelligence in terms of certain types of information processing? Or is that the low level of what's going on, and we should be analyzing at a higher level but being careful not to contradict the lower level? How do we do that? What consequences does this computer stuff, or an alternative like dualism, have for the discussion? *Singer doesn't cover this.*
    - ET: PS wrote this in 1973 when less was known about computers or neuroscience. Has he written an update?
      - PS: Yes, Animal Liberation at 30.
        - ET: This paper doesn't discuss brains, computers, software, information processing, etc. PS's case is incomplete. What material should I look at which agrees with PS and covers those issues?
        - PS: [Looking at some stuff the paper does say.] Animal rights are much more popular today.
        - PS: Is bias on grounds of species defensible? No.
          - ET: I agree.
        - PS "If species is not morally important in itself, is there something else that happens to coincide with the human species, on the basis of which we can justify the inferior consideration we give to nonhuman animals?"
          - PS: "Peter Carruthers argues that it is the lack of a capacity to reciprocate."
            - PS: [PS gives more explanation of Carruthers' view and a short rebuttal.]
            - ET: I also disagree with Carruthers.
          - PS: "Many other ways of marking the special moral significance of human beings have been suggested: the ability to reason, self-awareness, possession of a sense of justice, language, autonomy, and so on. But the problem with all of these allegedly distinguishing marks is, as noted above, that some humans are entirely lacking in these characteristics and few want to consign them to the same moral category as nonhuman animals."
            - PS: E.g. "Some humans—infants and those with severe intellectual disabilities—have intellectual capacities inferior to some animals"
              - ET: PS hasn't gone into detail with documented, scientific observations of particular humans or animals nor has PS discussed *epistemology* and how to use it to judge inferior or superior intellectual capabilities. So this is an unargued assertion that's crucial to his case (and which, in my considered opinion, I disagree with).
  - ET: Is there a binary (not a matter of degree) sort of intelligence which is required for suffering? I think yes. *Singer doesn't cover this.*
  - ET: Are animals like robots? Is a mouse like a Roomba? Roombas don't suffer, right? I think yes. *Singer doesn't cover this.*
  - ET: What exactly is suffering, intelligence or rationality? *Singer doesn't cover this.*