

## Ethics & Equality

Peter Singer, *Practice Ethics*, 3rd Edition (1980/1993/2011)

**Background:** Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham & John Stuart Mills

- Bentham: capacity for *suffering* as criterion
- Spectrum of Sentience: stone (none), mouse (some), human (more, depending on age, etc.)
- Specieism

**Peter Singer** (1946 -) - professor of bioethics at Princeton University, one of the best-known, influential, and widely read of all contemporary philosophers (1975: *Animal Liberation*)

**“Unsanctifying” Human Life** (vs. “Quality of Life” for all sentient “beings”)

1. Human population: ~1 billion in 1800 to > 7 billion today: [census.gov/popclock](http://census.gov/popclock)
  - a. Elizabeth Kolbert’s Sixth Extinction: didn’t know about any extinction until 1700s.
  - b. Now: Anthropocene era
  - c. *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari
    - a. Humans as (one among many) members of the Animal Kingdom
  - d. Parallels: how enslaved/woman/animals viewed historically

### Recommended Reading

- Peter Singer, The Life You Can Save: How to Do Your Part to End World Poverty
- \_\_\_\_\_, The Most Good You Can Do: How Effective Altruism Is Changing Ideas About Living Ethically.

### Websites

- [thelifeyoucansave.org](http://thelifeyoucansave.org) - interactive application of the insights of Singer’s ethical perspective.
- [givewell.org](http://givewell.org) - some of the world’s best underfunded charities that can provide solid evidence of their effectiveness in alleviating poverty.

Jonathon Haidt, "Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics & Religion":

