FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Ethics Into Action: Henry Spira and the Animal Rights Movement

Peter Singer
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This book is a good read for those interested in the animal rights movement or those who enjoy biographies about intriguing people. Spira has definitely led an interesting life.

Spira started to seek justice for the oppressed at a young age. In high school he left home and became a member of a left-wing Jewish youth movement which strongly espoused anti-materialism and independence (this mindset has been with him since). His early campaigns dealt with unions, civil rights, FBI witch-hunts and the Cuban revolution. He was blacklisted from the Merchant Marines for being a national security risk (the Army then turned around and drafted him). He also has the distinction of putting J. Edgar Hoover in the “hot seat.”

The bulk of the book deals with Spira’s fight for animals. Singer explores this in great detail using his comprehensive files (which cover most of the walls of his sparsely furnished apartment). Singer, a philosopher and author of many books on ethics, is himself a well-known animal rights advocate. He is also a friend of Spira’s. Spira made few enemies in the animal use field (unusual for his line of work), though he says he prefers to work with the companies he wants to change: “It seems to me that when a corporation is responsive to our concerns, it makes no sense to clobber them on the head.”

The last chapter has two parts; first, “the blueprint”-Ten Ways to Make a Difference, and secondly, looking at the meaningfulness of Spira’s life. To this Spira says, “one wants to feel that one’s life has amounted to more than just consuming products and generating garbage.”

Great changes have come about due to Spira’s effective perseverance (especially for the millions of animals that are now exempt from certain painful and mutilating procedures) making it clear that his life far exceeds his simple interpretation.

Julie Cote'