

The Case Against Meat

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Introduction

There is a simple but powerful argument against the human practice of raising and killing animals for food (RKF for short). It goes like this:

1. RKF is extremely bad for animals.
 2. RKF is only trivially good for human beings.
- So,
3. RKF should be stopped.¹

Call this *The Case Against Meat*. Many consider *The Case Against Meat* to be decisive. But not everyone is convinced by it. Four main objections have been proposed:

1. *The first premise is false.* RKF is not extremely bad for animals, or at least, given the possibility of free-range farming, it needn't be. In fact, by giving animals an existence, RKF may even be in the best interests of these animals.
2. *The second premise is false.* RKF is far more than merely trivially good for human beings. This is because of the pleasures of eating meat and what these contribute to various social and cultural aspects of our lives.

¹ The classic statement of this style of argument is from Singer (1975).

3. *Animal welfare is relatively unimportant.* Even if both premises of the argument are true, animal welfare is nowhere near as valuable as human welfare. It simply doesn't matter as much how they fare.

4. *As individuals, we are powerless to change anything.* Even if it would be best if RKF were to stop, none of us has any reason to abstain from eating meat. This is because our individual purchasing decisions have only a negligible effect on the demand for meat, and so none at all on RKF.

In this essay, I will attempt to shore up *The Case Against Meat* by providing new responses to each of these objections.

1. The First Premise

Many have claimed that RKF is good for animals by giving these animals an existence. Leslie Stephen, for example, writes:

The pig has a stronger interest than anyone in the demand for bacon. If all the world were Jewish, there would be no pigs at all.²

But it is implausible that having an existence can be better for a being than having no existence at all. To be better off in one scenario than in another one must have a level of well-being in *both* scenarios. But those who do not exist in a given scenario are not poorly off in that scenario. Rather, they have *no* level of well-being in that scenario.

It may be objected that non-existent beings *can* be well or poorly off. Cinderella, for example, does not exist, but she was very poorly off until she met her Fairy Godmother.

But when we talk about Cinderella, we are not saying 'there is some woman who had evil step-sisters, rode to a ball in a pumpkin, fell in love with a prince, had a level of welfare', and so on. We are saying precisely that there is *no* such woman. When we say that Cinderella was poorly off until she met her Fairy Godmother, we are saying that *if there had been* such a woman—a woman

² Stephens (1896).

fitting these descriptions—then this woman *would* have been poorly off until she met her Fairy Godmother.³

Suppose all of this is granted. A defender of RKF may reply: If one's having an existence cannot be good for one, then one's having an existence cannot be *bad* for one either. If this is so, however, then RKF, while it may not be good for any of the animals that it raises and kills for food, cannot be bad for any of these animals.

However, it is crucial to distinguish between two parts of RKF:

1. RKF's bringing animals into existence, and
2. RKF's treating these animals in a particular way.

It is not (1), but (2), that is bad for animals. RKF is not bad for animals by bringing these animals into existence. RKF is bad for animals *by giving worse lives to these animals who it has brought into existence than these same animals might have had*.

To this, a defender of RKF may object that I am assuming that RKF involves *factory farming*—i.e., farming in which animals are raised in cramped spaces, caused to feel much pain during their lives, and killed in a brutal manner. While it is true that factory farming gives worse lives to animals than these same animals might have had, RKF need not involve factory farming. RKF might instead involve only *free-range farming*, which, let us say, gives to the animals in question happy lives—including, for example, plenty of green space to roam around in, good quality food, contact with each other, and so on—and then kills them painlessly in their sleep without their anticipation.

However, I am not assuming that RKF involves factory farming. Even if RKF were to involve only free-range farming, the lives it would give to the

³ Some might worry that I have missed Leslie's point. His point, it may be said, is not that RKF is good for particular animals, but that it is good for particular *species* of animals. If there were no more pigs, then this would be bad for pigs, taken collectively. But it seems very hard to make sense of the idea of things going well or poorly for a species—independently, at least, of how things are going for particular members of this species. Moreover, even if there was a sense in which pigs as a species could do well independently of the well-being of particular pigs, it is unclear why their well-being in this sense would be normatively significant in the slightest. It is highly plausible that it is the well-being only of *individual* beings that has this sort of value. If no individual being is benefited by a given practice, then it is irrelevant that there may be some sense in which this practice is good for its species.

animals in question would still be much *shorter* than the lives they might otherwise have. These animals would be much better off living longer lives in their free-range farms.

A defender of RKF may deny that animals such as cows, pigs, chickens, etc., have anything to gain from living longer. More life, it may be said, is good for a being only if this being *desires to live longer*, or at least has some *long-term plans, projects, or goals* that would be completed or fulfilled if it were to live on. Cows, pigs, chickens, etc., have no such desires, plans, projects, or goals, and so nothing to gain from additional life.

Some animal advocates have responded by claiming that cows, pigs, chickens, etc., *do* have such desires, plans, projects, or goals. As evidence of this, they have pointed to such things as the concern such animals seem to have for the survival and flourishing of their own offspring.

But this seems to me the wrong response, for two reasons. First, even on the most plausible desire-based theories of well-being, it is not the satisfaction or frustration of one's *actual* desires that is good or bad for one, but only those desires that one *would have if one were suitably idealised*—e.g., a fully informed, vividly imagining, maximally mature version of oneself.⁴ Cows, pigs, chickens, etc., might not, *as they are*, have any desires to live longer or for future things, but they might well have such desires if they were suitably idealised. It is common for families to speculate on what their family dog or cat might be like if he or she were to become much more intelligent and able to converse with them. Animals like dogs and cats seem to many of us to have individual personalities that might not only survive, but perhaps be made fully manifest by, their transformation into beings with greater cognitive faculties. If this were so, then we might expect such transformed beings to have preferences concerning how the lives of their actual, non-idealised selves are to go. Among other things, we might expect them to prefer longer rather than shorter lives for their actual selves (providing, of course, that these lives were to be lived on free-range farms).

Second, it does not seem necessary for additional life to be good for one that one have desires (actual or idealized) that would be satisfied by it. On the contrary, it seems enough that the additional life *would involve certain kinds of pleasures for one*. Why would more life be good for a normal human adult like myself? One reason is that there are certain kinds of pleasures on the horizon for me. Why would more life be good for a young or middle-aged cow, pig, or

⁴ See Sidgwick (1907) and Rawls (1971).

chicken living on a free-range farm? One reason, similarly, seems to be that, in such a setting, there are certain kinds of pleasures on the horizon for it.

I say *certain kinds of pleasures*, rather than simply *additional pleasures*, for an important reason. On the view I hold, *purely repeated pleasures*—i.e., pleasures that introduce nothing qualitatively new in terms of pleasurable-ness into a being's life—add nothing to that being's lifetime well-being.⁵ Any further pleasures involved in a longer life are good for one only if these pleasures *bring something qualitatively new in terms of pleasurable-ness to one's life*. If all a person gets in having more life is just the same pleasures of watching their favorite sitcom over and over again, then this person has gained nothing by living longer. Similarly, I believe, if all an animal gets in having more life is just the same pleasures of chewing grass over and over again, then it has gained nothing by living longer. The thing is, though, I believe there is considerable scope for further qualitatively new pleasures in the life of a free-range animal who is still young or middle-aged. My suspicion, indeed, is that many of those who believe that additional life cannot be good for an animal believe this only because they are falsely presupposing that the only future pleasures available to cows, pigs, chickens, etc.—or at least cows, pigs, chickens, etc., that have spent some time in a free-range farm—are purely repeated ones.

What pleasures do I have in mind? Consider a family dog, Gertie. Imagine Gertie running around today in the local park, chasing sticks, meeting new dogs, having new olfactory pleasures, and exploring parts of the park she has never been to before. It seems clear to me, and I hope to you, that it was a good thing for Gertie that she lived on til today. If she had died peacefully in her sleep last night, this would have been bad for her, since she would not have lived on to experience all these wonderful qualitatively new doggy pleasures. Similarly, cows roaming free in a green paddock with plenty to eat, even if they have no future-oriented desires, may have evolving social lives with each other that are a source of qualitatively new pleasures for them as time goes on, or slow dawning realizations about their lives or vague increments in understanding that are pleasurable in various ways, or different or deeper appreciations of the field in which they are grazing as it undergoes changes during the shifting seasons, or experiences of watching their offspring grow into adulthood and reproduce themselves that involve pride or satisfaction. To kill them when they are young or middle-aged would be to rob them of these qualitatively new pleasures.

⁵ For further defense of this idea, see Bramble (forthcoming).

I conclude that animals on free-range farms would be better off living into old-age than being painlessly killed in their sleep during youth or middle-age.

One final objection: What about RKF involving only free-range farming that allows the animals in question to live into their old age or til they die of natural causes?

I accept that RKF of this kind would not be bad for the animals in question. But would there be much of a market for such meat? This is unclear given that many consumers of meat seem to be of the opinion that the flesh of older animals is tough and tasteless. In any case, as I will be arguing in Section 2, even RKF of this kind may be bad for *us*.

Of course, the crucial question is whether the amount that animals would gain by living into old-age on free-range farms (rather than being killed in youth or middle-age) is *greater* than the amount that humans would gain by these animals being killed in their youth or middle-age (rather than when they are old). To answer this question, we need to know in what ways meat consumption affects human well-being. It is to this matter I now turn.

2. The Second Premise

Many people believe that human beings need to eat meat in order to be healthy. But even the American Dietetic Association acknowledges that

vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan diets, are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.⁶

Still, many meat-eaters remain unconvinced. They say they feel lacking in energy, and in health more generally, when they don't eat meat, and they take these feelings to be more reliable indicators of their levels of health than the findings of current science.

⁶ This is from the abstract of "Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets," *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, volume 109, issue 7 (July 2009), pp. 1266-1282, http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xml/advocacy_933_ENU_HTML.htm.

But such feelings do not necessarily indicate ill-health. They may simply be withdrawal symptoms from giving up a substance to which one has become addicted. Indeed, these feelings seem similar to those many of us have when we give up, say, coffee, and nobody thinks that the fact that one feels this way in the coffee case shows that giving up coffee is bad for one's health. (On the contrary, it is a feeling one must go through in order to regain health). Moreover, the meat industry has paid big money to advertisers to try to get us all to think of meat as necessary for health and vitality. We must factor this in when assessing our own feelings about whether meat is really necessary for our health.

It may be objected: But when I stop eating meat, I feel lethargic. This may not be evidence that my health is independently damaged, but this lethargy itself constitutes a decline in health. Health includes things such as how energetic or vital one feels.

However, even if this is true, withdrawal symptoms like these do not last very long. Persist with a vegetarian diet and one will likely soon feel energetic again—even more energetic than previously, depending on how much meat was in one's diet. One's cravings for meat, too, will disappear, or at least diminish substantially. All this would happen more rapidly still if meat were not readily available or if most others were also abstaining. Moreover, if our society were to give up meat, then future generations would not get addicted to meat in the first place and so suffer none of the withdrawal symptoms of having to give it up.

Suppose all of this is granted. Still, it may be objected: Meat consumption makes a very large contribution to our well-being because of the *pleasures* it gives us.

Many people seem to think that if we were limited only to vegetarian meals, eating would soon become a tiresome exercise, and life would lose much of its appeal.

However, as many vegetarians have pointed out, those who make this objection cannot have sampled very much vegetarian cuisine. While it is certainly true that the vegetarian options at most restaurants and fast-food joints today are pretty bland or unappetizing, they are hardly representative of what can be done in the kitchen without meat. Vegetarian meals can be not only healthful, they can be delicious and satisfying, and admit of such great variety that one need never get sick of them. Moreover, if we all stopped eating meat, the vegetarian options at restaurants would quickly get tastier and more

varied, and in any case it is easy to learn how to make delicious vegetarian meals at home.

A more sophisticated argument has recently been offered by Loren Lomasky. Lomasky claims that the pleasures of meat

afford human beings goods comparable qualitatively and quantitatively to those held forth by the arts. Lives of many people would be significantly impaired were they to forgo carnivorous consumption.⁷

Lomasky argues for this claim by appeal to the widespread and powerful human desire for meat (or its subjective importance to us). He observes that “All across the globe...as incomes increase so does the amount of meat in people’s diets”.⁸ He goes on:

When we look at the world’s great cuisines we discover that almost without exception they not only include meat but also feature it as a focal point of fine meals. In France as in India, China as in Italy, meat is sovereign...That so many religions advance constraints on which animals are to be eaten and how the permissible ones are to be slaughtered and prepared conveys a recognition of meat eating as being among the very important components of how human beings can live well.⁹

There are two problems, however, with this argument. First, it relies on a desire-based or subjective theory of well-being, and, as I suggested above, the most plausible versions of such theories hold that it is not one’s *actual* desires, but only one’s *idealized* desires, that determine what is good or bad for us. This is because, as David Sobel nicely puts it, idealized desires “are more fully for their object as it really is rather than for the object as it is falsely believed to be”.¹⁰ This is a problem because, while it may be true that most people have a very strong desire to eat or enjoy meat, it is not clear that they would continue to have this desire if they were suitably idealised. In fact, it seems likely that, apprised in a vivid way of all the gory details of the manner in which most

⁷ Lomasky (2013), p. 190.

⁸ Lomasky (2013), p. 185.

⁹ Lomasky (2013), p. 185.

¹⁰ Sobel (2011), p. 59.

animals who end up on our plates are raised and killed, most of us would not want to eat meat—let alone enjoy it—ever again.

Second, as I also suggested above, desire-based theories of well-being are implausible. There is not space here to fully make the case against such theories, but recall my claim above that such theories cannot explain the value for us of future pleasures. It seems good for Gertie the dog that she lived on until today to experience an array of qualitatively new doggy pleasures, even if this involved no desire of hers being satisfied. If desire-based theories are false, then even if our desires to eat or enjoy meat were to survive idealization, this would not show our eating or enjoying it to be significantly good for us.

There is, however, a different, and better, way to argue for Lomasky's claim. This is to say that the pleasures of meat are extremely good for us, not because we want (or would want) them, but just because of *the particular phenomenology of these pleasures themselves* (i.e., 'what it is like' for one to experience them). No vegetarian diet (at least given present technologies) is able to provide this particular pleasurable phenomenology. Any life without such phenomenology is to that extent impoverished.

Moreover, it may be added, if we all stopped eating meat, then our *cultures* would be greatly diminished, and along with these the richness of our social and cultural encounters. One way we stay connected to our ancestors is through the meals they pass down to us. If we all stopped eating meat, then this important link with the past would be severed.

What should we make of this argument? I think we have no choice but to accept that the pleasures of meat, and what these contribute to various social and cultural aspects of our lives, make us well off in ways that no quantity or quality of vegetarian food could possibly achieve (again, given present technologies). The absence of these pleasures from a person's life (even in the life of someone who has no desire to eat or enjoy meat) represents a real loss for that person. Moreover, this is not a trivial loss. These pleasures are *significantly* good for one.

However, the important question is: Is this significant loss a significant *net* loss? In what follows, I will sketch three reasons for thinking that it is not.

First, what we would lose by giving up the cultural traditions associated with our meat consumption may be fully compensated for by pleasures gained from reinventing these dishes in vegetarian ways and forging new traditions at the dinner table. It is not as if by removing meat from our diet *all* our important connections with the past would be severed. There would still be a great deal of cultural continuity that would be possible. And we should not

underestimate what may be gained by starting afresh and exercising our creativity.

Second, meat is very costly to produce. If we were to cut meat from our diets, the resources that are currently spent on its production could be redirected toward other areas of our lives such as health, education, infrastructure, and so on.

Third, there are reasons to believe that there could be some heavy psychological costs associated with meat consumption. Consider, first, that most of us grow up as children who love animals. When we first discover that the meat on our plate is the body of an animal who has been killed for our consumption, this distresses us greatly. When we learn further of what goes on in farms and slaughterhouses, even free-range ones, many of us are truly horrified. We are, however, very good at putting these thoughts out of our heads and carrying on with our meat-eating—especially given the often considerable social and economic pressure to do so. But an idea ignored can continue to affect one. There is a growing body of evidence that most of us experience many kinds of significant pleasurable and unpleasurable feelings *without being aware of them*—i.e., in the background of our consciousness.¹¹ An especially vivid example (on the pleasure side) is provided by a patient of Oliver Sacks, who writes:

Sense of smell? I never gave it a thought. You don't normally give it a thought. But when I lost it—it was like being struck blind. Life lost a good deal of its savor—one doesn't realize how much 'savor' is smell. You smell people, you smell books, you smell the city, you smell the spring—maybe not consciously, but as a rich unconscious background to everything else. My whole world was suddenly radically poorer.¹²

On the side of unpleasurable experiences, Daniel Haybron writes:

Some affective states are more elusive than the paradigmatic ones, particularly moods and mood-like states such as anxiety, tension, ennui, malaise...They may exceed our powers of discernment even while they are occurring...A vague sense of malaise might easily go unnoticed, yet it can sour one's experience far more than the sharper and more pronounced

¹¹ See, for example, Haybron (2007), Schwitzgebel (2008), and Bramble (2013).

¹² Quoted in Rachels (2004), p. 225.

ache that persists after having stubbed one's toe. Likewise for depression, anxiety and related mood states, at least in their milder forms. Consider how a tense person will often learn of it only when receiving a massage, whereas stressed or anxious individuals may discover their emotional state only by attending to the physical symptoms of their distress. Presumably being tense, anxious, or stressed detracts substantially from the quality of one's experience, even when one is unaware of these states.¹³

How can this happen? Haybron explains it as follows:

Everyone knows that we often adapt to things over time: what was once pleasing now leaves no impression or seems tiresome, and what used to be highly irritating is now just another feature of the landscape. Could it also be that some things are lastingly pleasant or unpleasant, while our awareness of them fades? I would suggest that it can. Perhaps you have lived with a refrigerator that often whined due to a bad bearing. If so, you might have found that, with time, you entirely ceased to notice the racket. But occasionally, when the compressor stopped, you did notice the sudden, glorious silence. You might also have noted, first, a painful headache, and second, that you'd had no idea how obnoxious the noise was—or that it was occurring at all—until it ceased. But obnoxious it was, and all the while it had been, unbeknownst to you, fouling your experience as you went about your business. In short, you'd been having an unpleasant experience without knowing it. Moreover, you might well have remained unaware of the noise even when reflecting on whether you were enjoying yourself: the problem here is ignorance—call it reflective blindness—and not, as some have suggested, the familiar sort of inattentiveness we find when only peripherally aware of something. In such cases we can bring our attention to the experience easily and at will. Here the failure of attention is much deeper: we are so lacking in awareness that we can't attend to the experience, at least not without prompting (as occurs when the noise suddenly changes).¹⁴

Similarly, I want to suggest, it may be the case that, knowing what meat is—and, in particular, what we do to animals in farming and slaughtering them for

¹³ Haybron (2008), p. 202.

¹⁴ Haybron (2007), p. 400.

food—sours or pollutes our experiences of eating meat, and perhaps our experiences of living in this world more generally, in ways that are very hard or even impossible to attend to while we are still meat-eaters. Certainly, many people claim to find the experience of giving up meat similar in various respects to the experience Haybron describes of being at home in one's kitchen when the compressor of the whining refrigerator switches off. Many say they experienced a tremendous sense of relief or freedom, or a lightness of being, after giving up meat—feelings they had not anticipated, and that suggest they were experiencing unconscious pain beforehand.

Part of the unconscious pain felt by meat-eaters, I suspect, has to do with their having deliberately turned away when they were children from something that they sensed at the time was an important moral issue. This turning away seems likely to leave one with a burden comparable to that carried by a person who has reason to suspect a friend of theirs of having committed some heinous crime, but who refuses to investigate further or turn her friend in for some relatively trivial reason (say, fear of upsetting the balance of her social life). People who ignore qualms they have or silence parts of themselves cannot be fully happy individuals. Moreover, their being like this may prevent them from being the sort of open people who are able to take joy in many other aspects of life. So, ignoring the issue of meat, refusing to investigate, may close one off to various other possible pleasures.

It may be objected: But what about *free-range* farming? If (as I conceded in Section 1) animals who are raised in free-range farms, and get to live on into old-age, are not harmed by RKF, then why should we have any qualms at all about participating in this system that raises and kills them for food? Why should our participation in such a system have any tendency to make us feel bad?

I accept, of course, that there would be nothing bad about such a system deriving from harms inflicted on these animals. In such a system, these animals are not harmed, and so there can be nothing of disvalue deriving from their being harmed. Since this is the case, there may be a sense in which we *should* not be disturbed or upset by such a system, or by our participation in it. But even such a system, I want now to suggest, would nonetheless cause most of us psychological suffering (even if we believed it should not).

Let me explain. For most of us, the thought of the dead bodies of our friends and loved ones, or even those of complete strangers, being cut up or torn to pieces is deeply distressing. It is even worse to think of their body parts then being devoured by some creature. That it causes such distress to us seems

to be, not because we think it harms these people (for they are already dead and so cannot be harmed by anything anymore), but because it reminds us of the fact that we are embodied (and so finite) beings, and with that much of the suffering and tragedy of our lives. We prefer to bury intact the bodies of our loved ones, or burn them, so that it is not possible for them to be taken apart.

I suspect that, for many of us, there is a similar pain—albeit often an unconscious one—that accompanies our thoughts of what takes place in slaughterhouses, even slaughterhouses where the animals in question have been killed painlessly without their anticipation. These practices are unavoidably grisly. The thought of the bodies of these animals being taken apart, ending up on our plates, and being devoured by us, is a painful reminder of what we all are: embodied beings prone to disease, suffering, and death.¹⁵

To emphasize: I do not pretend to have proven here that we suffer any of the unconscious pains I have been describing. What I have said remains largely speculative. But I do hope to have persuaded you that there is some possibility, and perhaps also some reason to believe, that such pains exist—that is enough for my purposes. Whether such pains actually exist I will leave to the scientists of the future, with their superior technologies, to confirm or disconfirm.

I conclude that, while the absence of the pleasures of meat in a person's life truly does represent a significant loss for that person, when we take into account (i) the pleasures involved in forging new culinary traditions, (ii) the economic opportunity costs of meat production, and (iii) the possible psychological costs associated with meat-eating, we see that it is probably not a *significant net loss*, and may not even be a net loss at all.

3. The Unimportance of Animal Well-Being

According to some, even if RKF is extremely bad for animals and only trivially good for us, RKF should continue. This is because animal well-being is far less important than human well-being. Great harm to animals is less bad than the relatively small sacrifice involved for us in giving up meat.

But this is an implausible idea. There seems no good reason why the well-being of some creatures should be worth more than the well-being of others. It seems far more plausible to think that the intrinsic value *simpliciter* of

¹⁵ For a summary of some recent studies examining the relationship of a vegetarian diet to emotional well-being, see Ruby (2012), p. 146.

some increase in a being's lifetime well-being is proportional just to *the amount of the increase*.

Why, then, do some people *think* that human well-being is worth more than animal well-being? As others have pointed out, it seems likely to have to do with the fact that humans seem capable of having much higher levels of lifetime well-being than any other animals on this planet. Those who think human well-being is more valuable may be confusing the fact that we can be more greatly benefited with our benefits having greater value.

For this diagnosis to be right, however, we need an account of why human beings are capable of much higher levels of lifetime well-being than animals. No-one has yet provided a satisfactory such account. In the remainder of this section, I want briefly to suggest one.

The reason human beings are capable of much higher levels of lifetime well-being, I believe, has to do with a point I made in Section 1, namely that purely repeated pleasures add nothing to a being's level of lifetime well-being. Human beings have available to them *much greater diversity* in pleasurable experiences than other animals do. While I claimed above that Gertie the family dog may experience many qualitatively new pleasures on a given day in exploring the park, meeting other new dogs, smelling new smells, etc., I think these pleasures are quite limited when compared with the pleasures we humans are able to obtain from our much deeper relationships with each other, much greater capacity to understand ourselves and learn about the world, more sophisticated experiences of art and beauty, ability to appreciate the importance of things, set goals, and work toward their completion, and capacity for selfless or virtuous behavior.

It is an easy mistake to confuse this greater capacity for well-being with our well-being's having greater value. But it is a mistake. The death of a normal cow in a paddock is less bad than the premature death of a normal human being, but this is not because human well-being matters more than animal well-being. It is because there is much more that continued life can add to the lifetime well-being of a normal human being than to the life of a cow. When we *do* genuinely harm animals a lot—as RKF does—this *is* extremely bad.

4. Causal Impotence

Suppose everything I have said so far is correct, and it would be best if RKF were to stop. Nonetheless, it may be claimed, none of us has a reason to abstain

from eating meat. This is because our individual purchasing decisions have only a negligible effect on the demand for meat, and so on the lives of the animals raised and killed by RKF.

Strictly speaking, this objection does not threaten the conclusion of The Case Against Meat. After all, this conclusion says nothing about our individual reasons to act. It says only that RKF should be stopped (or, as I have been taking this to mean, that it would be *best* if RKF were to come to an end).

Nonetheless, I believe that even if we cannot, by abstaining from meat, improve the lives of any animals, we may each have sufficient reason to abstain from it. This is because, as I suggested in Section 2, it is possible that there are heavy psychological costs associated with meat-eating. While the absence of the pleasures of meat in a person's life represents a significant loss for that person, it is a loss that may be fully compensated for by freedom from these psychological costs. If this is right, then many of us may have most *self-interested* reason to stop eating meat.

Furthermore, even if most of us lack the power to cause many other people to give up meat (and so reduce demand for meat enough to save or improve any animal lives), most of us are able, through making changes to our own diet and publicly opposing RKF, to cause some of our friends to abstain from meat as well, which would be very good for *them*.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to shore up The Case Against Meat by offering new responses to the four main objections to this argument. In Section 1, I argued that RKF is bad for animals, not by bringing them into existence, but by giving worse lives to the animals that it has brought into existence than these same animals might have had. I argued that even free-range farming is bad for animals by giving them shorter lives than they would have had if they had lived on into old-age.

In Section 2, I argued that while the absence of the pleasures of meat in a person's life represents a significant loss for that person, it is not a significant net loss, and may not even be a net loss at all in light of the opportunity costs of meat-eating and the possibly heavy psychological costs associated with meat-eating.

In Section 3, I tried to explain why human beings are capable of higher levels of lifetime well-being than other animals on this planet, and so why some

people might mistakenly believe that human well-being is more valuable than animal well-being.

Finally, in Section 4, I pointed out that it is no objection to The Case Against Meat if, as individuals, we cannot save or improve any animals lives by becoming vegetarian. I then suggested that, even if we cannot save or improve any animals lives by becoming vegetarian, we may have sufficient self-interested reason to stop eating meat due to the psychological costs of meat-eating I described in Section 2.

We should stop raising and killing animals for food. Our practice of doing so is very harmful for these animals, and not very good—and perhaps even, on balance, bad—for us.

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