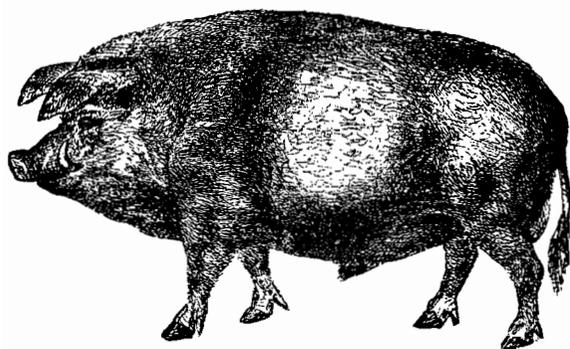


# Pigs and Piety: A Theocentric Perspective on Food Animals

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It is not by mere chance that Virtue ... dwells in greatest proportions precisely upon that same span of soil where hogs thrive in greatest abundance. In Iowa, where people ... read the Bible in the bathtub, there is approximately a full litter of pigs ... for every single citizen.

William Hedgepeth<sup>1</sup>

Theological discussions can be abstract and hard to apply, but I do not want this one to be. The reason is that I want to convince you to adopt a specific stance toward food animals. The best way for me to do this is by telling you my story.

I am a Mennonite, and we, typically, are rural folk. I do not know whether every other Christian sect or denomination has more farmers per capita than we do, but I would be surprised if Presbyterians or Catholics had a higher ratio. Mennonites aspire to live simply and peacefully, and those who farm try to farm in a way that returns to the land as much as we take out of the land. In Story County, Iowa, where I live, the simplest and most sustainable way to farm is called family farming, where you raise grains in summer and feed them to livestock in winter. You use the manure to

supply nitrogen fertilizer to your pastures and fields, and you sell your pigs and cows at auction when they are fat. On family, or mixed, farms, the rearing and selling of livestock is the *raison d'être* of the operation, and the operation is, in the current jargon, sustainable, ecologically balanced, and consistent with principles of Christian stewardship.

Three initial confessions. I am not a farmer; my theological convictions are informed as much by the Reformed tradition as by the Anabaptist; and I am not nearly as virtuous as William Hedgepeth's paean to hog-surrounded Iowans would lead you to believe. I know something about the way mixed farms operate, and I know something about the way Mennonites think. I know, too, that Hedgepeth is right; there are eight times as many pigs in my state as people. But, contrary to what my mother thinks, I am not a moral virtuoso. Neither am I interested in defending received traditions about family farms, or sectarian theology, or the supposed angelic effects of boars and sows on people. I am interested in drawing on the wisdom invested in the practice of family farming and the reasoning of theologians and philosophers in order to answer this question: Is it in God's will to raise and eat pigs?

In the conclusion to a book called *Is There A Moral Obligation to Save the Family Farm?*, I argued in 1987 that mixed farms are the most politically viable institution for meeting obligations concerning food



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production, rural economies, and future generations.<sup>2</sup> The burden of proof is on those who think we should get rid of family farms and replace them with large industrial farms. My brother-in-law read the book and then asked me what an ideal farm would look like. I had no answer, and not only because I did not know enough about the daily operation of farms. I did not know what to say about the practice of raising and slaughtering animals, the cornerstone of the family farm's economy. I was sure that factory farms were not the answer because it is clearly inhumane to confine four chickens to floorless cages and to keep anemic veal calves in narrow chutes.<sup>3</sup> But the question for me went beyond "What constitutes humane care?" to "Is it right to raise and slaughter animals?"

Several years after beginning to champion the virtues of family farms, and a few months after converting to the Mennonites, I became convinced by philosophical arguments that eating meat is morally wrong. This made for a dilemma. How can someone who loves family farms reject the central practice on which they are based? How can someone of my Anabaptist and Reformed theological proclivities reject the time-honored tradition of Christian stewardship in which the domestication and humane use of animals is not only permitted but encouraged? And yet, there I was, newly convinced that domestic animals had at least a *prima facie* right not to be killed and eaten at a young age, but without a clue as to how to square this belief with my theological and agricultural convictions. Did I mean to say that the actions of generations of Mennonite farmers in raising and slaughtering hogs were sinful?

### **I. How I Became a Vegetarian**

I have told you that philosophical, not theological, arguments convinced me to abandon meat-eating. Abandoning it was not an easy thing to do because meat-eating is not an abstract philosophical issue. You cannot just make up your mind to oppose meat-eating the way you might make up your mind to oppose apartheid. If you make up your mind on this subject, you cannot really defer acting on your resolution until the next faculty meeting. You have to decide, before your stomach growls—probably within the next four hours, whether you are going to act on your new belief. The concreteness of the issue was a barrier for me.

I did not have a hard time deciding whether pigs experience pleasure and pain, or whether they have

emotions, desires, wishes, preferences, and a family life. All of this seemed evident to me from watching the pigs on my Uncle's farm. Reflecting on a pig's life will probably convince you, too.

Consider: pigs are not, as common knowledge has it, dirty, dumb, or solitary, animals. If given a sufficient amount of room, pigs will invariably defecate in the same area, teach their young to keep away from this area, and establish the area at a considerable remove from the sleeping area. Contrary to popular belief, pigs prefer to wallow in clean water, not mud, and will not play with toys soiled by feces.<sup>4</sup> Pigs are intelligent, affectionate, and social animals. The only thing they seem to love more than having their stomachs and ears rubbed is lying next to their neighbors after having run playfully in circles around them, squealing and barking all the while.

What is it like to be a pig? No one can get inside a pig's mind, of course, but we can think carefully about how they appear. Here is William Hedgepeth's perspective on his day spent in a pig pasture:

Idling hogs amble and squat. Some root. One sneezes. The sleeping hog beside me wags his ear a twitch or two and otherwise remains removed from the milieu. A Hampshire bites a Yorkshire's ear. A Poland China bites my foot. A white hog with a black face and black spot on his side executes a galloping gleeful leap into the vacant pond. A wandering rooter pussyfoots up the hill and sneezes right into the face of the one asleep, who responds merely with another quick ear-wag and continues his snooze (p. 125).

... A hog [taking a] siesta on the hilltop has just jumped up to bump an intruding rooter down the slope, somersaulting to the bottom with a tumbling eruption of high-pitched squeals. Most of the hogs are up now, moseying about, perfectly unhurried: gambol and squat awhile, browse in the dried mud, drift in bulky serenity among the stumps and stubble and birds, call a sudden halt to it all every so often to look up at a sound or nudge another in the loin. Probe, poke, trot, root. Ah, hogs! They have unquenchably inquiring minds, each with a vast capacity for sustained wonder. And such a beatific quality—a certain handsomeness, really (p. 128).

Aristotle believed each animal has a *telos* or purpose to which it is directed, a “that for the sake of which” it exists. If Hedgepeth is right, the *telos* of a hog is the will to root, to find his food at least three inches underground, and to get his snout into every tractor tire, hole, and crevice within reach. Not forgetting sleeping and investigating and eating and mating and playing, rooting must be one thing for the sake of which God made hogs.

The daily activities of hogs clearly suggest that they possess desires, preferences, pleasures, pains, and social lives. You may also now have some idea of what the *telos* of this higher mammal may be. The hog: Kingdom, *Animalia*; Phylum, *Chordata*; Class, *Mammalia*; Order, *Artiodactyla*; Family, *Suidae*; Genus, *Sus*; Species, *Sus scrofa*; Subspecies: *S.s. scrofa* (the Central European wild boar), *S.s. leucomystax* (Japanese wild boar), *S.s. vittatus* (Southeast Asian pig), and *S.s. domestica* (domestic). These are some of the facts about hogs, but facts alone, no matter how many, would never add up to the moral judgment that it is wrong to kill and eat *Sus scrofa domestica*. For that, we need a general moral principle or two.

Here’s one: It is wrong to deprive a being of its right to life. When I first started thinking seriously about the one and a quarter inch thick Iowa chops I so loved to barbecue, I thought I had to decide whether pigs had rights, and whether I was depriving them of that most basic right, the right to life, by paying other people to carve them up for me. I was impressed by arguments like Joel Feinberg’s and Michael Tooley’s that it is impossible for an entity to have a right to life unless that entity has interests in the sense of “able to have an interest in *x*.”<sup>5</sup> Clearly, it is *in the pig’s interest* to be able to sleep, eat, and root. But this is a different, weaker, sense of “interest” than the one required. For there are things that have interests that cannot take an interest in anything. It is in a hay baler’s interest to be kept full of baling twine, but the machine does not possess the conscious awareness necessary to take an interest in seeing that it does not run out of twine in the middle of a row. Having things that are in its interest, and even having things that are good for it, does not make a hay baler a bearer of moral rights. The machine does not have the *right* to be well maintained

In order to have moral rights, something must be conscious, *capable of taking an interest* or *able to have an interest* in what is good for it. We are capable of taking an interest in food, freedom, and the future, and we each have a basic moral right to food, freedom, and

a future existence. Do pigs? According to R. G. Frey’s analysis, an animal has to be able to possess concepts in order to have interests in the relevant sense, because without concepts the animal cannot represent its interests to itself. If the animal cannot represent its interests to itself, it cannot *take* an interest in anything. To have concepts, the animal must possess language, because that is the medium in which beings frame concepts. Here the argument reaches rock bottom, and I found myself asking, Do pigs possess language?

We, I reasoned, surely “possess language,” although I knew that talking about our mental life in this way committed me to a specific psychological paradigm, the paradigm philosophers call the belief and desire framework. To interpret ourselves in terms of beliefs and desires is not the only way to explain what goes on inside, but it is a powerful and well-developed way, and it coheres with the picture we typically use to think about ourselves. So I was prepared, and am still prepared, to accept the belief and desire schema.

Humans have both beliefs and desires. We have already established that some higher mammals—pigs—have, at least, desires. When my Uncle’s barrows and gilts lift the lids on their feeder bins, I see no simpler or more efficient way of interpreting their behavior than to say that they *desire* to eat. When Hedgepeth’s piglets chase each other around the pasture, there is no better explanation than, the pigs *want* to play. The central question is not whether pigs have desires, but whether they have beliefs. If they *believe* that there is food under the lid, or that by hiding behind the tire they will surprise their buddy, then they must possess language and concepts, because beliefs are made of language and concepts. If they have beliefs, they may be capable of *taking an interest* in their eating and playing. And if they can take an interest in those things, they may have a moral right to food, freedom, and a future.

Frey is convinced, however, that animals do not have language because, he asserts, they are not capable of making assertions or lying. If Frey is right that animals do not have language, then animals cannot have concepts, beliefs, or interests in the sense required for having moral rights. If animals cannot take an interest in their future, they cannot have a right to that future. It follows, according to Frey, that painless slaughter does not violate a pig’s right to continued existence because pigs have no moral rights.

This line of argument, if sound, would constitute a powerful philosophical justification for the historical

Mennonite practice of domesticating and eating pigs, and would buttress theological positions emphasizing ecological harmony and stewardship of nature. But do pigs lack language? They may not have the ability to make or entertain declarative sentences, Frey's way of interpreting what it means to be capable of language. But it seems to me that pigs communicate with each other, and they can, if they so desire, communicate with us in certain limited but distinctive ways.<sup>6</sup> Pigs, moreover, appear to many observers to reflect in a self-conscious way about their environment. Some, including me, think they have seen pigs trying to deceive each other. Pigs may indeed possess language, and may have the conceptual ability to take an interest in their future. But if they can take an interest in their future existence, they may have a moral right to that future. And if they do, our killing them violates their most basic right.

If my factual claims about pigs' lives are correct, and if the moral principle, that it is wrong to deprive a being of its right to life is true, and if I have made no mistakes in reasoning to the conclusion, then it may be wrong to deprive a pig of its right to life. So I reasoned for several months.

## **2. The Problem with Animal Rights Talk**

According to this line of reasoning, pigs have the right to life because they have beliefs and can take an interest in their future. But what about beings without beliefs who cannot take an interest in their future? What about fetuses, very young infants, and adults in irreversibly comatose states? Lacking beliefs, language, and the ability to take an interest in their future, so-called marginal human beings also lack the equipment necessary to have a right to life. But do we really want to say *that*, that newborn babies do not have a right to life because, as Tooley puts it, they do not "possess any concept of a continuing self"? Tooley candidly, if somewhat coolly, admits this line of thought leads to the conclusion that it is not morally wrong to kill young infants.

Any chain of reasoning ending with that conclusion must be mistaken. I began to see that trying to think about morality solely in terms of rights leads to counterintuitive results. And I was soon convinced that the consequences of thinking about which beings we may and may not justifiably kill solely in the language of individual rights is itself a *reductio* of such a narrow approach. As one philosopher has pointed out, "we have to take seriously the possibility...that some actions are

wrong for reasons other than that they violate rights."<sup>7</sup> And as another adds, "we may have *duties* to entities which don't have rights."<sup>8</sup>

To think there is a single simple criterion according to which we may decide whether we are justified in killing a being is to think in excessively constricted terms. And to think that "the way is open" to killing any being that lacks moral rights is to think in terms of an unacceptable conceptual paradigm.<sup>9</sup> I decided I had to rethink my approach, and fast.

## **3. A Theocentric Perspective**

There I was, converted to the view I should not eat higher mammals but no longer persuaded by the arguments that had brought me to that point. I wanted a more substantial and holistic grounding for my conclusions, so I returned to my teacher, James Gustafson, for his theocentric perspective.

Gustafson argues that ethics as traditionally construed is excessively anthropocentric in that it concentrates only on what is good for the human species. Gustafson wants those in religious traditions, at least, to take into account the wider patterns of God's governance and care for all of Creation, and he urges his reader to search for rules cohering with the natural relations of all things. Adapting a command from Paul's letter to the Romans, Gustafson summarizes his approach this way:

Be enlarged in your vision and affections, so that you might better discern what the divine governance enables and requires you to be and to do, what are your appropriate relations to God, indeed what are the appropriate relations of all things to God.<sup>10</sup>

If we relate to all things in ways that show respect for the relations of all things, will we eat meat? Let us agree to judge our practices by the criterion of whether a practice fits with the natural relationships of plants, animals, and humans, as these relationships can be discerned from the study of science, philosophy, and theology. Suppose, further, that "Man, the measurer, can no longer be the measure of the value of all things," and that, instead, "all things" are now the measure of us. May farmers continue to buy and sell feeder hogs?

Gustafson himself seems to have little interest in this question, and offers no guidance. To figure out what

a theocentric perspective on food animals might be, then, I turned to Scripture. You will not be surprised to learn that I found a thoroughly ambiguous answer. The *Bible* implies here that God wants lions and lambs to lie down together in peace; in the first chapter of *Genesis* we are told that God gave us only plants and fruits for food.<sup>11</sup> Yet the *Bible* implies elsewhere, in passage after passage, that it is alright to be carnivores. After the Fall, God explicitly issues permission for us to eat animals.

How can a Mennonite reconcile these biblical permissions to eat meat with moral vegetarianism?



#### **An Interlude: Christmas Meditation**

As I think about the *Bible* and animals toward the end of 1990, Christmas approaches, and I am reminded of my earliest memories of Christmas.

There is my mother's manger scene: the stable made of wood; the angel hung from the peak; baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger. There is Mary, hovering over the infant, attentive to his slightest movement, and there, a step behind her, is Joseph, the wise men, and the shepherds.

I could end my description there, but I would have skipped the animals, of course. For there, behind the holy baby and the Virgin and in front of the shepherds, are the wise men's camels, looking gangly and out of place; the shepherds' dogs, asleep at their masters' feet;

the cow, chewing her cud; and the sheep, woolly and white. Over here is the donkey, shaggy and brown.

Jesus Christ comes to earth in human form, and we witness and rejoice at his birth. But he was born not in one of our houses, but in an animal shed. It is not insignificant that animals witnessed and rejoiced at his birth. For God put animals around the manger just as God put them at the scene of every major event in salvation history. Think of the scene at the Garden of Eden. Before God made women and men and boys and girls, God made cows and donkeys and dogs and sheep. Think of God's first words to humans. When God first laid down the law for how we are to treat each other, God did not overlook our relations to animals, making a point of instructing us *only* to eat plants. Originally, we were vegetarians, and God did not want us to raise and slaughter animals. As the author of *Genesis* 1:29-30 puts it,

God also said, "I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food. All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of heaven, and to all reptiles on earth, every living creature."

And think of the scene at the future New Creation. The biblical story begins with humans as vegetarians, and it ends that way, too. When the Lord comes in power, when the poor are judged with justice and the knowledge of the Lord fills the land, then, we are told by Isaiah,

the wolf shall live with the sheep,  
and the leopard lie down with the kid;  
and the calf and the young lion shall grow up  
together,  
and a little child shall lead them;  
and the cow and the bear shall be friends,  
and their young shall lie down together.

One day, all animals will stop doing harm to each other, and "the lion shall eat straw like cattle." And if the "infant shall play over the hole of the cobra," what excuse will we have for killing cobras, or lions, or cattle? For on that day, no living thing will "hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain" (*Isaiah* 11:5-9).

Or think of the stories Jesus liked to tell. If the number of times someone refers to lambs and sheep and goats and vipers and asses is any indication of their affection for animals, then our Lord must have loved

nonhumans as much as St. Francis of Assisi loved them. Jesus' parables are full of animals. So, pick any major biblical scene, and you will find animals there. The menagerie at the manger scene is not a biblical anomaly.

Why all the biblical concern with animals? Because, in the words of my mother's favorite hymn, God's eye is on the sparrow. In the very first covenant God makes with us after God has destroyed the world in the flood, God makes an agreement with Noah and his family that includes animals in it. The covenant is not, as we ordinarily think of it, between the Deity and humankind but, rather, between the Deity and all of creation, human and animals included. *Genesis* 9:13 renders it like this:

My bow I set in the cloud,  
sign of the covenant  
between myself and the earth.

And five times in the ninth chapter of *Genesis* God promises never again to destroy creation; the promise includes humans, but it extends to "every living creature that is with you, all birds and cattle, all the wild animals with you on earth, all that have come out of the ark" (*Genesis* 9:8-10).

If the biblical story begins and ends with humans as vegetarians, why do most Christians, unlike Brahmins, adherents of the Jain religion, and many Buddhists, eat meat? The reason is that we believe God gave us permission to do so. When and where? At the same time God made the covenant with Noah. God tells Noah to "be fruitful and increase, swarm throughout the earth and rule over it" (*Gen.* 9:7), adding

The fear and dread of you shall fall upon all wild animals on earth, on all birds of heaven, on everything that moves upon the ground and all fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Every creature that lives and moves shall be food for you; I give you them all, as once I gave you all green plants (*Gen.* 9:2-3).

This is the divine permission on which the nomadic and agrarian economies of the West are based. To me, the passage reads more as a grim prediction of what will happen or, perhaps, as an unavoidable curse God lays, grudgingly, on the world. It does not read to me as God's preferred norm. Be that as it may, there are plenty of other passages recording God's commands to sacrifice animals. The world's three major Western religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all condone

meat-eating, and all support economies founded on the domestication, slaughter, and consumption of animals.

And yet, there by Jesus' crib, are the animals. Are they there only to serve us? Well, they do serve us, and some have said we have rigorous covenants to keep with them because they serve us. We have a covenant with the donkey, it is said: You carry the mother of our Lord, and we will care for your every need. We have a covenant with the dog, it is said: You provide us companionship, and we will give you exercise. And we have a covenant with the horse, it is said: You pull our plow, and we will give you a warm stall and oats. We signed different terms with sheep, cows, turkeys, chicken, fish, and hogs: They serve us by dying for us at a premature age. For modern breeds of hogs, whose life expectancy might conservatively be put at ten years, the contract runs out at six months. Of course, we provide them with plenty of food and water while they are with us. But they pay, early, with their lives.

Are these fair contracts?

The *Bible* indisputably approves of them. The authors of Scripture recognize the intrinsic value of animals in the original and final creations but, in the meantime, in the between times, God seems to have made a concession to our sinful condition by relaxing the law against the eating of animal flesh. For hard after describing the Garden of Eden, the author of *Genesis* describes the post-Fallen world as one in which the animals are "meat for us," and in which we are to rule over, have dominion over, all forms of plant and animal life.

What about Jesus? Even though animals often serve as examples in his parables, he said nothing to our knowledge about vegetarianism. There are no recorded instances of him eating red meat in the New Testament, but it seems reasonable to suppose, given the Mediterranean culture of his time, that he ate fish. And he said nothing about restoring the original herbivorous condition of the original and final creation. So I must ask again: In the face of the strong biblical permission to raise and slaughter animals for food, can a Mennonite argue for moral vegetarianism if he takes the *Bible* and its tradition of interpretation seriously?

This is a difficult question for me. My tentative answer has two parts. The first part is that vegetarianism is not required for all people at all times. When the eating of meat is the only way to sustain human life, then I believe it is permissible to do so. The *Bible* was written by largely nomadic or pastoral peoples who may not have been able to flourish without raising the flocks of

sheep that appear throughout the *Bible*. So, on the one hand, the *Bible* may originally have been addressed to an audience in which a limited diet of animal flesh was required for existence. Notice, however, what does not follow from this concession. It does not follow that affluent Americans in the 20th century may eat meat. We can easily have our need for protein met in ways other than eating pork chops and hamburgers.

The second part of my reply to the *Bible*'s explicit permission of meat-eating is this. While the *Bible* does address many sins, it does not address all sins. For example, the *Bible* does not explicitly call discrimination on the basis of age or sex a sin. Nor does it call slavery a sin. Jesus said nothing about the practice of buying and selling people with skins darker than ours. Are we to conclude that God would have us continue to own slaves, or that Jesus Christ, the Savior and Liberator of all people, would not disapprove of our beginning once more to conduct slave raids on poor developing countries? Even though the *Bible* says nothing that could be taken as a direct condemnation of slavery, slavery is still wrong. The reason is because the overall themes of the *Bible* are freedom, liberation, justice, and mercy. The nineteenth century American Methodists and Quakers who led the abolitionist movement knew this. Even though Christian slave owners in the nineteenth century could point to a multitude of specific biblical passages that implicitly permit slave-holding, the abolitionists had the stronger argument, and we now acknowledge their point of view as most in keeping with the whole biblical narrative.

I have come to interpret the *Bible*'s views on the killing of animals in the way I interpret its views on the owning of slaves. Even though each practice is implicitly, if not explicitly, condoned, the practice is still shown to be wrong by the larger story of salvation in Jesus Christ. How could the biblical authors have been so wrong on this point of morality? I do not believe they were wrong on a point of morality. I believe they were wrong on point of fact. Regarding slave-holding, they were wrong to think that darker skinned humans were not conscious, rational individuals. Once this perception of the facts was corrected, darker skinned humans could no longer be thought to fall outside the *Bible*'s moral protection.

Analogously, the biblical authors were wrong about mammals. They thought animals were not conscious, sentient individuals. Once this misperception is changed, nonhuman animals no longer fall outside the

*Bible*'s moral protection. To argue this point effectively would require me to say why I think animals are conscious and sentient beings. That involves the philosophical argument I made earlier that turns on the claim that mammals aged one year and older have beliefs, desires, emotions, social and family lives, and interests in the strong sense of "able to take an interest in" something. Having that, they are entitled to basic moral rights, including the right to life. To my mind, Tom Regan makes this argument persuasively.<sup>12</sup>

Just as early abolitionists had to fight both the wider slave society and the power of slave-owning Christians who rested their case on a selective reading of Scripture, so Christian defenders of animals must fight both the wider meat-eating society and the power of carnivorous Christians who rest their case on a selective reading of Scripture. No easy chore. I find encouragement in the scene around the manger. There we see a picture of creation in the peaceful coexistence God originally intended and finally wants. Around the manger we see the truth of God's admission that God "desires steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (*Hosea* 6:6). And we see what it means for God to have shown us what is good. God shows us in the manger scene that what the Lord requires of us is "to do justice, and to love kindness and [to] walk humbly with [our] God" (*Micah* 6:8).

Scripture gives an ambiguous answer to the animal question. As I mentioned previously, the text implies here that God wants lions and lambs to lie down together, while it states explicitly, elsewhere, that all animals are to be food for us. I concluded, in my journey, that I could no more convince myself to be a vegetarian on the basis of the *Bible* alone than I could convince myself to be a vegetarian on the basis of rights talk alone.

I did not find clearer advice when I turned to other religious traditions. Consider Hinduism, in which Brahmins revere all animals, practice vegetarianism, and adhere to the doctrine of *ahimsa*, noninjury. Like Albert Schweitzer and the Jains, Brahmins in principle will not even swat a gnat. Around the corner, however, lower castes behead a goat in pious sacrifice to the goddess Kali. Within Hinduism there is no consensus about the propriety of universal abstention from meat. Consider Native American traditions, where you find ambiguous attitudes. There is an attitude of respect for the buffalo's power and immensity, and warriors pause to pray to the beast, imploring it to lend them its noble spirit. But then they proceed to slaughter it, eat it, and

wear its skin. Surely it is better to use all of the animal if you are going to kill it, but wouldn't it be still better to eat just corn and beans and squash and to wear cotton?

I have not, in short, found unambiguous guidance about how God would have us relate in a natural way to domestic pigs, from Gustafson, from Scripture, from Christian theology, or from the world's religions. Every argument that the Christian tradition should be read as sanctioning humane treatment and slaughter of food animals, may be met by one that the tradition should really be read as pointing proleptically toward vegetarianism. So, even if my theologian colleagues will not forgive me, they may at least understand why I turned back at this point to my philosophical colleagues.

#### **4. An Environmental Theory of Respect for Nature**

Gustafson insists that correct actions flow more from the possession of proper affections than from the following of proper rules. Paul Taylor believes that character is the heart of ethics, too, and I read his philosophical theory of respect for nature as a complement to, and development of, certain aspects of Gustafson's theology. Taylor makes the attitude of respect for nature the basis of all moral reflection about the environment, and identifies four dimensions of that attitude. Two of them are relevant here. The first is the valuational dimension, "the disposition to regard all wild living things in the Earth's natural ecosystems as possessing inherent worth."<sup>13</sup> The second is the affective dimension, "the disposition...to feel pleased about any occurrence that is expected to maintain in existence the Earth's wild communities of life, their constituent species-populations, or their individual members."<sup>14</sup>

Taylor believes we owe the attitude of respect toward wild living things. He avoids the language of animal rights, but he insists we follow the principles of proportionality and minimum wrong. The first principle means that we should never act disproportionately, for example, violating an elephant's basic interest in life simply to satisfy our nonbasic interest in having ivory carvings on our mantelpiece. "Greater weight is to be given to basic than to nonbasic interests, no matter what species, human or other, the competing claims arise from. Nonbasic interests are prohibited from overriding basic interests."<sup>15</sup> The second principle states that "the actions of humans must be such that no alternative ways of achieving their ends would produce fewer wrongs to wild living things."<sup>16</sup> From these two principles you

may see how protective Taylor is of wildlife. His attitude toward domestic animals is less than clear, however. The reason is that Taylor is impressed by the fact that pets and food animals have been purposefully bred to serve a human purpose. Unlike wild animals whose existence does not depend on their fulfilling our needs, domestic animals exist only because we have exercised dominance over them and their environment. Taylor puts the matter forcefully:

[The practice of rearing food animals depends, first,] on total human dominance over nonhuman living things and their environment. Second, [it involves] treating nonhuman living things as means to human ends ... The social institutions and practices of the bioculture are, first and foremost, exercises of absolute, unconditioned power. They are examples of the way humans "conquer" and "subdue" nature. (The conquest of nature has often been seen as a key to the progress of civilization.) When we humans create the bioculture and engage in its practices we enter upon a special relationship with animals and plants. We hold them completely within our power. They must serve us or be destroyed. For some practices their being killed by us is the very thing necessary to further our ends. Instances are slaughtering animals for food, cutting timber for lumber, and causing laboratory animals to die by giving them lethal dosages of toxic chemicals.<sup>17</sup>

Taylor does not explicitly draw the conclusion that it is morally permissible to continue to subdue nature in this way, but that conclusion is implied by his remarks. Other environmental philosophers, such as J. Baird Callicott and Mary Midgley, have a similarly bifurcated attitude toward animals.<sup>18</sup> They think wild animals should be left alone whereas domestic animals should be treated humanely—that is, maintained in good health until they are to be killed painlessly.

It began to look as if my turn to environmental philosophy and the theocentric perspective might cause me to overturn my decision against meat-eating. If there is an absolute difference between wild and domestic animals, and if this difference means that wild animals have intrinsic value while domestic animals have only instrumental value for humans, then it might be permissible to raise and slay hogs and yet impermissible

to kill wild wart hogs. To decide whether the difference between tamed and untamed was really this decisive, I had to read some animal science. Just how different are Minnesota Number Threes from wild boars?

I immediately ran into a problem. To my knowledge, there are no scientific studies comparing the physical or behavioral traits of specific domestic pigs with wild pigs.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, on the basis of certain generalizations scientists have proffered in the literature on swine production, some observations about the difference can be offered tentatively.<sup>20</sup> Feral swine tend to have aggressive dispositions. They often live in herds of four to twenty foraging animals consisting of one to four females and their young. Wild boars range freely in forest settings throughout the year, staying close to the herd during the reproductive season, when they become territorial and protective. Omnivorous and voracious eaters, sows and boars alike spend the majority of their waking hours walking, rooting, and eating. The courtship of an oestrus female by a wild boar lasts several days, with the male grunting a soft rhythmic mating song and having to overcome a last minute rebuttal from her when she wheels and faces him just before he tries to mount her. The wild sow may spend days making a nest for her young. The boar seems to enjoy the presence of piglets, tolerating them as they wiggle on top of him as he rests.

Domestic swine tend to be larger, less fatty, more docile toward humans and less agonistic toward each other. As you might guess, we have little information about how large a "domestic herd" might be because pigs in confinement are not allowed to form natural social groups. Boars are kept away from the sows, feeder pigs are thrown together according to age, and sows are kept in maternity pens before parturition and during nursing. Even though they are usually denied the space and freedom to form natural relations with other pigs, domestic pigs are still known to adapt rapidly to new conditions. They exhibit a high degree of intelligence and have, for example, been trained to hunt truffles and indicate targets like Pointer dogs.

The sexual relationships of confined pigs are noticeably different from their wild counterparts. When a sow in heat is presented to a boar, copulation occurs quickly. There is very little behavior corresponding to the long courtship of wild sows and boars, as domestic sows usually allow boars to mount immediately, and boars are selected, in part, for their virility and promiscuity. Boars kept away from sows sometimes form

stable homosexual relationships. Their behavior toward young piglets is hard to observe for reasons noted above.

There are, in sum, significant differences between the physical, psychological, and social characteristics of domestic and wild pigs. Wild pigs tend to be smaller, fatter, more romantic, less promiscuous, and more ferocious. Domestic pigs tend to be larger, leaner, less romantic, eager to mate in season or out of season, and more docile. The differences stem from the influence of human intervention as farmers have consciously selected individual pigs for the traits now possessed by sows and boars. Breeders have weakened the pig's natural defenses, and rendered them dumber, less agile, and more meaty, than their wild relatives. Differences are undeniable. And yet we may ask, how great are the similarities? Are the differences significant enough to justify claims that we have exercised "absolute power" over the domestic animals?

The differences in physical appearance of African bush pigs and Duroc hogs are noticeable, but both look more like the other than they look like other species. Both adapt quickly to changed environmental conditions. Both exhibit tremendous behavioral plasticity in the face of fluctuations in weather, diet, and physical threats. Both exhibit attitudes of defiance, pride, and affection. Both are extremely social. Both prefer not to leave the company of others, except for the case of older males, who sometimes prefer occasional solitude. Both like to root in soil and water, to wallow in pools. Both exhibit distinctive territorial behavior, keep separate areas for elimination of urine and feces, and train their young to do the same. Both are curious about new objects, and will sniff and nibble any protrusion or hole. Both have a complex range of vocal snorts and whoofs for communicating a variety of emotions, signals, and alarms. Both have nearly identical olfactory and auditory capacities. Neither is able to regulate body temperature for at least two days after birth. Neither is receptive to newcomers to the herd. Both are gregarious animals, huddling together against cold weather and enjoying warm weather in close proximity.

The list could go on, but I have made the point. The differences between domestic and wild pigs pale in light of their similarities. May we then continue to believe that we have exercised "unconditioned" power over the being of the production hog? The scientific evidence fails to support the claim because the identity of the production hog is as much a product of natural forces as it is of human intervention.

May we at least claim responsibility for the distinctive features for which we have selected in our hogs? For example, domestic pigs are diurnal creatures, whereas wild pigs sleep during the day and are active at night. Is this trait a human mark stamped on the pig? It may be, just as the sexual promiscuity, docility, and physical size of the domestic hog may be marks of human intervention. Still, we must ask whether these traits are really of our doing or whether they are not responses that may be equally attributed to the hog. Consider that domestic hogs tend to be diurnal creatures whereas wild hogs tend to be nocturnal (hunting is easier in the evening hours.) Did humans cause this difference? I doubt it. Hogs are highly adaptable creatures, and there is not much stimulation in hog pens at night. The domestic hog's preference for daylight activity may be a tribute to its own plasticity of behavior, a trait caused as much by the pig's own initiative as by the breeder's selections. Being diurnal, in short, may be a learned response to environmental conditions, and it may be a characteristic pigs would abandon if turned out of their pens or if stimulated at night. This suggests that certain behavioral differences between domestic and wild species may not only not be permanent but may be reversible.<sup>21</sup>



Based on a review of the empirical differences between undomesticated and domesticated hogs, Taylor's claim that we have created these animals seems weak, as does the implication that they are human artifacts we may regard the way we regard tools.<sup>22</sup> There is no question that today's breeds are expressions of human power and control over nature, the result of invasive, repeated, and sustained manipulations of generations of animals. The Durocs and Hampshires and Yorkshires now on Mennonite family farms would almost certainly not be here were it not for humans. Hogs are part of our moral community in a way wild animals never have been because their evolution is intricately connected with our own. They depend on us for their existence. But it does not follow that we are justified in continuing to intervene in their histories by encouraging them to inbreed, and by slaughtering their young.

If Taylor's views about food animals are not entirely clear, other environmental philosophers' views are clear. Midgley and Callicott seem to condone meat-eating as part of the long history of relations between humans and domesticated animals. The view gains credence in light of the fact that the history of a being is relevant to deciding what that being is and what our natural duties are toward it. Consider Midgley's view. She approaches ethics from a biosocial perspective, and points out that we are members of nested communities, each of which has a different structure. According to our various roles in the various communities, we have various duties. The central community for many of us is an immediate family. We have duties not only to feed, clothe, and shelter our children, but to bestow affection on them. Bestowing similar affection on our neighbors' children is not similarly required of us, however. Not only is it not our duty, but "it would be considered anything from odd to criminal were [we] to behave [toward neighborhood children the way we behave toward our own]." At the next level, we have "obligations to [our] neighbors which [we] do not have to less proximate fellow citizens"—to watch their houses while they are on vacation, for example, or to go to the grocery for them when they are sick or disabled. We have obligations to those in our state which we do not have toward human beings in general, and we have "obligations to human beings in general which [we] do not have toward animals in general."<sup>23</sup>

These subtly shaded social-moral relationships are complex and overlapping. Thinking of animals, Midgley argues that pets are surrogate family members

and merit treatment not owed either to less intimately related animals, for example, to barnyard animals, or to less intimately related human beings. Following Midgley's biosocial line of thinking, the narrative history of each animal defines its identity. Since hogs have been bred to play a certain role in our community, our duties toward them derive from understanding what their role naturally is.

Like Midgley, Callicott argues that the welfare ethic of the mixed community enjoins us to leave wild or "willed" animals alone, while caring humanely for domestic species. This means that we are justified in using domestic animals in the ways they have been bred to be used. It is not inhumane to use a Belgian draft horse to pull a wagon, as long as you do not abuse her in the process. It is not inhumane to kill pigs and chickens and steers for food as long as you care for them in a way that does not violate the unspoken social contract we have evolved between human and beast.<sup>24</sup>

Well, reading environmental philosophy made me wonder whether my decision not to eat meat had been divorced from narratives, history, and common sense, in the worst way. If the history and social role of a being plays a decisive role in determining what that thing is, and if today's pigs would not be here if it were not for the long history of human intervention in the mating patterns of hogs, then the raising and slaughtering of pigs is the very practice necessary for Durocs, Hampshires, and Minnesota Number Twos to exist at all. Who was I to condemn these creatures?

Callicott seemed to press the point on me. Those who condemn meat-eating thereby condemn the "very being" of the animals they are trying to defend. For without the long historical practice of meat-eating, Callicott writes, these particular animals would not exist. My moral vegetarianism weakened.

Then I started thinking about the biosocial, environmentalist claims. Do we condemn the very being of something if we disapprove of the lifestyle that being is forced to lead? Surely not. To condemn the way something is treated is not to condemn that thing. When we condemn slavery we do not thereby condemn the existence of the slaves. Far from it. In the interest of the good of the slave, we condemn the social contract that has evolved to rationalize the restriction of their freedom. Analogously, I came to see that I could condemn the practice of domesticating and slaughtering pigs without thereby condemning the existence of *these* pigs.

Having answered Callicott's challenge, I went back to Taylor's rigid differentiation between the respect owed wild animals and his quasi-instrumentalist view of domestic animals. I discovered on second reading that Taylor is more insistent on vegetarianism than I had thought at first, "even though," he writes, "plants and animals are regarded as having the same inherent worth."<sup>25</sup> The principle of fairness, captured in the metaphor of sharing the earth, draws attention to "the amount of arable land needed for raising grain and other plants as food for those animals that are in turn to be eaten by humans when compared with the amount of land needed for raising grain and other plants for direct human consumption.... In order to produce one pound of protein for human consumption, a steer must be fed 21 pounds of protein...[a pig must be fed] 8.3 pounds...[and a chicken] 5.5 pounds."<sup>26</sup> The land now in cultivation to grow grains for cows and pigs could be returned to wildlife refuge.

Taylor argues for vegetarianism by pointing out that humans have taken over much more than their fair share of the globe. To return land to wild animals we should cultivate less ground, shrink our farms' size, and probably concentrate them in one location so as to leave large tracts of wilderness. His reasoning seemed sound to me then, as it does now. And that is where I have come to rest, for the moment. There are good reasons, of an environmentalist and theocentric sort, for opposing the eating of meat.

I still had two questions: Would it be wrong, if we pulled in our plows and chemical sprays and shared the earth equitably with other species, to eat an occasional future pig raised on one of the small nonfactory farms? And if in that ideal world some of us revert to hunting and gathering as a permanent lifestyle, would it be wrong for us to kill and eat one of the millions of wild pigs?

To answer this question, I went back to Taylor's five priority principles. When the requirements of human ethics compete with those of environmental ethics, Taylor tells us to follow principles exhibiting the attitude of respect for nature. The fundamental criterion is fairness, read as species-impartiality. According to Taylor, both plants and animals deserve respect, even though neither one is a primary moral rights-holder. The first priority principle is the principle of self-defense.

It is permissible for moral agents to protect themselves against dangerous or harmful organisms by destroying them.

This principle “condones killing the attacker only if that is the only way to protect the self.” We must “choose means that will do the least possible harm.”<sup>27</sup>

The second principle is the principle of proportionality, and it deals with conflicts “between *basic* interests [for example, food, water, and continued existence] of animals/plants and *nonbasic* interests [for example, air-conditioned offices] of humans.”

Greater weight is to be given to basic than to nonbasic interests, no matter what species, human or other, the competing claims arise from. Nonbasic interests are prohibited from overriding basic interests.<sup>28</sup>

This principle prohibits such practices as

- Slaughtering elephants so the ivory of their tusks can be used to carve items for the tourist trade.
- Killing rhinoceros so that their horns can be used as dagger handles.
- Hunting and killing rare wild mammals, such as leopards and jaguars, for the luxury fur trade.
- All sport hunting and recreational fishing.<sup>29</sup>

The third principle is the principle of minimum wrong. Like the second principle, it concerns conflicts “between basic interests of animals/plants and nonbasic interests of humans.”

The actions of humans must be such that no alternative ways of achieving their ends would produce fewer wrongs to wild living things.<sup>30</sup>

Plants and animals and humans have equal inherent worth, in Taylor’s estimation, but he recognizes that rational people may decide to engage in activities involving harm to wild living things. As long as these people are “rational, informed, and autonomous persons *who have adopted the attitude of respect for nature*,” then “it is permissible for them to pursue [their] values only so long as doing so involves fewer wrongs (violations of duties) than any alternative way of pursuing those values”<sup>31</sup>

Taylor’s fourth principle is the principle of distributive justice, and applies to “conflicts between *basic* interests, in which nonhumans are not harming

us.” The cases in question, then, are cases where the principles of self-defense, proportionality, and minimum wrong do not apply.

When the interests of parties are all basic ones and there exists a natural source of good that can be used for the benefit of any of the parties, each party must be allotted an equal, or fair, share.<sup>32</sup>

The fifth principle is the principle of restitutive justice:

When harm is done to humans, animals, or plants that are harmless, some form of reparation or compensation is called for. The greater the harm done, the greater the reparation required.<sup>33</sup>

Using these principles, I was able to answer my two questions.

Consider the second question first. If I lived in a place or a time where I could not survive without hunting wild goats and sheep, or fishing for tuna and whales, then it would be permissible for me to kill and eat those animals. Why? Because the first principle enjoins self-defense and, *per hypothesis*, the only way to protect myself from death under the circumstances of my thought experiment would be to eat meat or fish. As long as I hunt and fish in a way that respects the principles of fairness, minimum wrong, and proportionality, I will be justified in my carnivorous behavior. There is, Taylor sagely points out, no principle requiring me to sacrifice my life for the sake of animals.

Consider now my first question, whether raising and slaughtering animals would not be permissible in the ideal world, in the world where the number of humans and farms is dramatically reduced. If there were, say, only 500 million of us instead of 5 billion, and only 50,000 small farms instead of half a million corporate farms, then other species might flourish. Under those conditions, couldn’t rational, autonomous persons who have adopted the principle of respect for nature decide to raise pigs in such a way that the animals were allowed maximal freedoms and long unhurried lives? And wouldn’t it then be the case that those animals would be better off living *that* lifestyle than never having the opportunity to be born at all?

This question is more difficult, but it seems to me we should answer it negatively. The principle of self-defense could not be enjoined to sanction such activity, because slaughtering the pigs in question, even toward

the end of their lives, would not serve any *basic* interest of ours; we can get our protein elsewhere. The principle of proportionality also offers little support, because our nonbasic interest in enjoying a good set of barbecued back ribs is prohibited from overriding the pig's basic interest in continued existence. The principle of minimum wrong would also argue against even a low level of meat-eating, since there are alternative ways of achieving our interest in experiencing robust gustatory pleasures.

Careful consideration of the natural relations of all things and rigorous adoption of the attitude of respect for nature inclines strongly toward moral vegetarianism. And thus was I moved, against the historical practices of my religious tradition and my personal convictions about the virtues of family farms, to think some higher mammals have mental lives roughly analogous to ours, that killing them for food, even in a painless fashion, does harm to them, and that I should stop having bacon for breakfast. I then had to explain this to my evangelical, Iowa farm-raised mother, who did her best to feed her four children meat three times a day. I also had to explain it to my Iowa farm relatives, Mennonite dairy acquaintances, and Colorado ranch buddies, all evangelical Christians, all outfitted with *Bible* verses describing God's permission to eat meat in *Genesis*, and Jesus' story of the prodigal son ending with the killing of the fattened calf and—well, you fill in the blank. I have, as I have admitted, no definitive response to what I perceive as the most convincing interpretation of what the biblical authors thought about this matter, and I have conceded the *Bible* for the present. But I hasten to add that I am not happy about this situation, because the text has authority for me and my community, and I am not prepared simply to abandon it.

### 6. Three Theological Arguments for Meat-Eating

In conclusion, I want to say something against three theological arguments for meat-eating. The first is that meat-eating is a concession to sin, and God granted us permission to eat animals because of our fallen condition. The idea here is that we could not reasonably be expected to control our carnivorous instincts once our taste buds had been debased and we had been exposed to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. So God no longer required truly moral behavior of us.<sup>34</sup>

This argument is not convincing, for two reasons. First, we know from experience that humans are capable

of controlling the instinct to eat flesh. Many former meat-eaters have changed their habits, difficult as it may have been to overcome the fear they would not find anything sufficiently full of protein to eat at the next meal. Second, if God really thought the Fall had so weakened us that God had henceforth to permit certain acts as a concession to our pitiful condition, wouldn't a merciful God decide to permit something less violent than bloodletting? How about allowing us not to respect our parents occasionally, or not keeping every fourth Sabbath, or gossiping during the cold month of February? These would seem more reasonable concessions to sin than allowing us to slit the throats of billions of God's good animals.

The second argument for meat-eating follows on the heels of Midgley's view that the domestication of animals is a mutual covenant evolved between us and animals. The idea here is that animals do not simply serve us; we have a contract to provide them with food, water, shelter, care, and comfortable lives. But what is their responsibility? To pay us back with their lives. The contract seems a bit one-sided. The argument would make more sense if it was generally understood to mean "Let the animals live in their natural social groupings, provide them with conditions under which they can pursue their interests, and let them live until a ripe old age before backing up the truck." But that is not the way the alleged covenant is generally understood. We squeeze hogs together into pens not large enough for them to establish their own area for defecating, we throw them together into new social groupings every few weeks, we control their reproductive cycles with manufactured drugs, and we kill them before they are six months old. If the terms of the agreement were to support hogs into comfortable retirement and then take the carcasses of animals dying of natural causes for sausage, the covenant argument would be more persuasive. I suspect, however, that not many meat consumers would sign it.

The third argument is that killing animals is permissible as long as we take the minimal number, and in a pious spirit. Native Americans kill the buffalo with a tragic sense for the loss of its life, and they kill only the number they need. They either eat or use the entire animal, and they do all of this with a humble and grateful spirit, demonstrating respect for the harmony and balances of nature.

Isn't it permissible to kill and eat animals this way? My response is Taylor's response: if it is a question of

survival, if it comes down to the Native Americans' life or the buffalo's life, then the principle of self-defense will justify the killing. I do not know how many Native Americans still fall into this category, but I am confident few of my readers face such dire circumstances.

I have tried to write concretely, telling you my story about my particular religious pieties, and my evolving attitude toward pigs. Philosophical considerations moved me to give up meat, but the environmental and theocentric perspective that warrants my view now is different from the animal rights one with which I began. My position is somewhat softer now, and does not amount to an absolute proscription against the taking of animal life. Yet, I regret to say, it offers little moral support to those farmers struggling to hold onto their land by raising animals to be led to slaughter.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> William Hedgpeth, *The Hog Book* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), pp. 54-5.

<sup>2</sup> Comstock, ed., *Is There a Moral Obligation to Save the Family Farm?* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> For a description of modern techniques of swine production on factory farms, see James Mason, "Brave New Farm?" in Peter Singer, ed., *In Defense of Animals* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), especially pp. 93-4.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Kathy and Bob Kellogg, *Raising Pigs Successfully* (Charlotte, VT: Williamson, 1985), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Tooley, discussing the alleged right to life of fetuses, gives what he calls the "particular-interests principle," which draws on Joel Feinberg's general "interest-principle." Tooley's principle states "It is a conceptual truth that an entity cannot have a particular right, R, unless it is at least capable of having some interest, I, which is furthered by its having right R." Michael Tooley, "In Defense of Abortion and Infanticide," in Joel Feinberg, ed., *The Problem of Abortion*, 2nd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1984), p. 125. Tooley's example of the principle is that "an entity cannot have a right to life unless it is capable of having an interest in its own continued existence" (p. 132).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Hedgpeth's informal survey of the meanings of hog sounds, like *groomk, rah, wheenk, and Wheeeeeeeiiiiiii* (p. 137).

<sup>7</sup> S. I. Benn, "Abortion, Infanticide, and Respect for Persons," in Feinberg, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Leigh Anderson, "Criticisms of Liberal/Feminist Views on Abortion," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 1 (April, 1987), p. 87.

<sup>9</sup> In "Autonomy and the Value of Animal Life," *The Monist* 70 (January, 1987), Frey argues that "the way is open to infanticide or the killing of severely handicapped newborns" because they are not autonomous beings. "Obviously," he concludes, "the way is also open to the killing of animals" (p. 51). I respond to Frey's argument in "The Moral Irrelevance of Autonomy," *Between the Species* 8 (Winter, 1992), pp. 15-27.

<sup>10</sup> James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, Vol. I*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984?), p. 327, drawing on *Romans* 12: 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> "All plants that bear seed everywhere on the earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food" (*Gen.* 1:29, NEB). Quoted in Tom Regan, "Christianity and Animal Rights: The Challenge and Promise," *Liberating Life* (Orbis), p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 81.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, p. 278.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, p. 283.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1989), esp. pp. 33-6, and Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter* (Athens: U. of Georgia Press, 1983), esp. pp. 112-24.

<sup>19</sup> A brief history of pig breeding for those who are interested: We have been intensively breeding sows and boars for about two hundred years. Until the sixteenth century, there were very few differences indeed between the wild and domestic pigs except for the fact that the wild boar was slightly larger. In the eighteenth century, the Englishman Robert Bakewell decisively broke any cultural prohibitions outlawing incest among animals when he bred his Leicester rams and longhorn bulls back to their daughters, and the way was open for intensive hog breeding. Farmers selected for desirable characteristics—characteristics such as physical size and fitness, size of litter and ease of reproduction, resistance to

disease, ability to gain weight quickly and efficiently, and tenderness of flesh. As they did, the pedigreed herds came to exhibit more and more physical uniformity, reflecting a narrowing of the genetic pool. Pigs selected for characteristics desirable to humans lost their agility (Irish Greyhound pigs were known to jump five barred gates) and their ability to survive in the wild. Pedigreed herds soon came to require increasingly skilled care from farm managers, veterinarians, nutritionists and husbandmen. The ratio of the length between the wild boar's intestine and its body length is 9 to 1. The boar puts its protein into making bone and a big head. The ratio for today's improved American breeds is 13.5 to 1, allowing the pig to consume more feed and convert it into meat along its sides and quarters.

<sup>20</sup> Much of the following information is taken directly from a study by E. S. E. Hafez and J. P. Signoret, "The Behaviour of Swine," in Hafez, ed. *The Behaviour of Domestic Animals* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1969), pp. 349-90.

<sup>21</sup> On this point, Klaus Immelman argues that it is very difficult to say that a specific behavioral trait has been caused by the process of domestication. Immelman writes: "the development of many structural and physiological characteristics also depends to a large degree on environmental factors; the artificial conditions in which the animals live can also lead to modifications that are superimposed on any possible genetic changes." Klaus Immelman, *Introduction to Ethology*, tr. Erich Klinghammer (New York: Plenum, 1980), p. 197. The reason is that changes in behavior can result from the animals' responses to environmental conditions. Such changes would have to be considered modifications made by the animal itself, not by human selection of specific genetic arrangements.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor refrains from saying food animals have a right to life. At one point he seems to imply the history of domestication has reduced food animals from the status of beings deserving respect to the status of "machines, buildings, tools, and other human artifacts" (p. 56). But he immediately adds that we must treat them in ways that are good for them, and "this is a matter that is quite independent of whatever usefulness [they] might have to humans" (p. 57). He writes, further, that "the question of how [domestic animals] ought to be treated could not be decided simply by seeing what sort of treatment of them most effectively brings about the human benefit for which they are being used" (p. 57). Taylor's view is not unambiguous, but this is because his primary concern is with our duties toward wild living things and not with our duties toward domesticated animals.

<sup>23</sup> J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics," in *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, op. cit., pp. 55-6.

<sup>24</sup> J. Baird Callicott, "Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Back Together Again," *Between the Species* 4 (Summer, 1988), p. 167.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, p. 295.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, p. 296. The reference for Taylor's figures is Francis Moore Lappé, *Diet for a Small Planet* (New York: Ballantine, 1971).

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, pp. 264-5.

<sup>28</sup> Taylor, p. 278.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor, p. 274.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, p. 283.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, pp. 282-3.

<sup>32</sup> Taylor, p. 292.

<sup>33</sup> Taylor, p. 304.

<sup>34</sup> The rabbinic tradition contains such an argument in *Sanhedrin* 59b: Rav Judah stated in the name of Rav, "Adam was not permitted meat for purposes of eating as it is written ... But when the sons of Noah came [God] permitted them [to eat the beasts of the earth]. ..."

David J. Bleich offers this restatement of the position:

... Primeval man was denied the flesh of animals because of his enhanced moral status. Permission to eat the flesh of animals was granted only to Noah because, subsequent to Adam's sin, his banishment from the Garden of Eden and the degeneration of subsequent generations, man could no longer be held to such lofty moral standards (p. 238).

See "Animal Experimentation," (pp. 194-236) and "Vegetarianism and Judaism," (pp. 237-50), in Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems, Vol. 3* (New York: KTAV, 1989). Bleich does not agree with this interpretation of the text: "In point of fact, this [Rav Judah's] talmudic dictum is simply a terse statement of the relevant law prior to the time of Noah but is silent with regard to any validating rationale" (p. 238).

Bleich notes that Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook also maintains that humans are unable in their fallen state to overcome their desire for meat, and refers to Kook's article in Hebrew "Afikim ba-Negev," *Ha-Pales* vol. 3, no. 12 (Elul 5663), p. 658.

