THE ETHICS OF EATING ANIMALS

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Summary

I intend to stimulate your intellect and interest about the rationale (or lack of it) for humans eating animals. Controversial questions are raised about the use of non-human animals and how they should be thought of. Philosophical concepts are included to help think about this. To relate this specifically to animal agriculture, issues are included to help clarify how farm animals are conceived, raised, and processed for food, and experimented with. Logical ways are provided to assist in making moral decisions and how to use them in solving the dilemma of how we should relate to animals. There are several approaches for deciding how to think about the issues, none of which is particularly ideal. You as an individual must ultimately decide independently before collective societal decisions can be established. It is clear that many animals have interests and that they should receive due respect. However, because animals are not humans and can not think like humans, they lack the level of psychological capacities to claim rights as humans do, and that where there are conflicts of interests between the two (especially ones of similar relative importance), human interests should prevail. Nevertheless, for moral reasons it is important to insure the well-being of animals by making every effort to prevent suffering and unnecessary pain. I hope you will be awakened and enlightened by this presentation and that you will dare to consider it when relating to animals as well as to your fellow humans.

Questions humans ask!

Biologically, humans and non-human animals are very similar and both are significantly different from plants. However, for as much as they are alike biologically, it seems perfectly clear that humans are more complex in social, rational, intellectual and spiritual attributes. However, to attempt a detailed explanation of this difference is too complicated and will be left to philosophers for debate! For simplicity in this presentation, the term 'animal' will always refer to all animals except humans.

Is it appropriate to *use* animals at *any* price? Specifically, is it appropriate to contain and exhibit them in zoos in the name of education, to domesticate and train them for pleasure, entertainment, and companionship, to encourage them to fight, to sadistically torture them, to experiment with them to resolve problems and questions concerning health of both humans and animals as well as to improve animals for food, to intentionally raise them to convert plants into foods that we consume and fibres that we wear, requiring animals to produce milk, eggs, honey, meat and hides, and to stalk and 'sportingly' kill them? Through the evolutionary process, humans have been intricately entwined with the lives of animals, even before the days of prehistoric man. However, today in our emerging affluent societies, we have reached a plateau of intellectual and social consciousness and curiosity related to our cultural and evolutionary struggles. I ponder such matters and raise questions about the moral validity and sanctity of our actions. I not only believe that we are obligated and responsible toward the well-being of animals, but that we who have invested our professional careers in the experimentation, education and promotion of using animals for food, need counsel on how we should behave, think and react to these concerns. Is there need for greater reflection, projection and interpretation?

Most humans have arbitrarily and inherently assumed, by tradition and supposition, that animals are to be used by man. If this is acceptable, then how should their well-being be considered? Is it not a paradox that we treat animals with kindness and care to improve their growth efficiencies so they can be ultimately sacrificed for food? How can this be reconciled? It is the intent here to address these issues both philosophically and practically. First, I have taken the counsel from others and have established the reasoning from which to think through such ethically related issues. In addition, I have attempted to provide a logical defense of man's right to use animals and the obligation to care for them too. I have proposed a number of issues related to meat production that seem relevant, and, readily admitting my own limitations, I have made every effort to approach them unbiasedly and objectively. For this purpose I have applied (with considerable assistance from others) accepted ethical principles and rational logic to conclusively resolve them. I do realize that such conclusions, however clear they may appear to us, certainly include doubts and controversies that may prove to be neither totally acceptable nor useful. I confess that this topic is subjective that never enjoys the absolute correctness that I have tried to provide. I have brought the topic as totally into focus as possible by presenting some discrete procedures accompanied by justifications and explanations we all can and should understand and respect.

How we can think about ethical issues

Before issues, as complex and controversial as the human/animal relationship, can be resolved, we must think through each issue with intellectual responsibility. We, as professional meat scientists have not always taken time to learn how to approach moral justifications or ethical decision-making of philosophical issues that have been left to debate and clarification by philosophical scholars. Therefore, we take too much for granted and have too little to contribute to logical discourse. It is difficult at best to identify and analyze ALL major issues, let alone sorting out and understanding the details associated with logic that are essential in discovering the truth. Nevertheless, I share some of the more basic and elementary thoughts that can assist in better understanding. The basic ideas belong to others, but I take credit for their brief simplification. My intent is to cover fundamental thoughts about ethics. It was the only way I knew to accomplish the task.

Philosophy

Practical philosophy is that discipline which helps us to objectively and thoughtfully think through a problem. We must use facts, intelligence, logic and wisdom, and without taking too much for granted. I have attempted to consciously minimize the influences that emotions and biases exert! This is not to suggest that emotions can not nor should not be considered, because man *is* an emotional creature. In fact, it is because of this that has stimulated the raising of human/animal issues. However, just because a person 'feels' a certain way about an issue is not an argument essential for making reasonable decisions. Emotions, interests, inherent values, feelings, psychological capacities and intuitions are nearly impossible to adequately define and quantitate. This becomes apparent when drawing sound conclusions to establish normative and moral ethics (Frankena, 1973). Conversely, it's impossible to eliminate or ignore them.

Ethics and rights

Ethics is that aspect of philosophy which develops and assesses moral theories. A moral theory is an analyses of what makes an action right or wrong, and of what makes a being good or evil. In establishing an ultimate moral value, the only thing that can balance one right is another right. Legal rights depend on there being some body that gives them. Conversely, moral rights cannot be given but are inherently possessed by everyone. Nonetheless, a right is possessed by a member of a species only if typical members of that species also can comprehend the notion of a right, exercise the right, and recognize possible conflicts concerning rights. Only in a community of beings capable of self-restricting moral judgements can the concept of a right be correctly invoked.

Rights are described and categorized in several ways, but for now there are two specific kinds that need addressing. The first includes those rights that are the result of majority actions and implementations. A given right, such as one that permits us legally to drive automobiles is decided on by society through laws agreed upon by lawyers and judges. As a society at large, we have entered into an agreement (contract) with our fellow citizens to permit, or give driving rights to those willing to follow the rules. They fall into a class that are neither God given nor basic to life, even though important.

The second kind of rights are the most important because they do relate directly to the core of life. They are related to what philosophers (Midgley, 1978; Yandell, 1989) call 'respect-for-persons' rights. No other human gives these rights because they are a basic component of life itself and more specifically meant for human beings. This is not because humans have earned them, or were given them by other humans, but because they simply are related to what's good about life. Without such basic rights or respect-for-persons, we could easily be convinced that life would not truly be worth living and that evil would prevail. 'Respect-for-persons' rights include the freedoms of speech, justice, choice of spiritual inclinations, and happiness. It also includes such basics as freedom from abuse, pain, and deprivation of food, shelter and the other needs to sustain and maximize the joy and pleasantness of living. These rights require no votes, no general consensus of opinion within the society or no contracts. They stand firm and free of any man-made requirements because they 'come with the territory'! They exist, and must be recognized because they also serve to describe humans that possess the psychological capacities to understand, respect and cherish them.

Now the question arises, 'Can animals have such rights'? The answer is clearly *no*. Animals are simply not persons and if they were they could share in such rights. But then, they would be humans and not animals! We would admit that certain mammals have interests in being loved, in being played with, and in being fed and cared for in a way that will make life enjoyable as only it is enjoyable for that particular animal. However, there is little scientific evidence to support the supposition that animals have the ability to claim rights. More importantly they do not appear to have the capacity to even care about such matters. However, this does not suggest that such a pronouncement gives license for humans to forget about the moral responsibilities to treat animals with care and concern, regardless of their capacities, or lack of them. Various species have different levels of interests and these interests must be dealt with. I discuss how humans consider animals when I review specieism. For now though, such views are classified as *interest sensitive specieism.*

Another way of thinking about rights would be to examine the traits so essential for processing rights. In other words, the beings involved must have both the capacity and the willingness to 'give' and 'take' in their deliberations to settle on the specific right in question, and how it is to be applied. The being must be able to learn, exercise, enjoy, give, claim, demand, assert, insist, secure, waive, surrender, etc. Also rights must include duties, obligations, privileges, powers, liabilities and risks. All of these characteristics are interrelated to the extent that they are behaviors and actions that each being is responsible for having the capacity to hold and execute. To put it in still another way, the ethical approach is to be aware of and to reflect systematically on values, moral standards and principles that play a role in all sorts of situations in which we have to determine which choice is right and which one is wrong.

We know that humans can not all think alike about a given issue, regardless of their intent to maintain objectivity. When rights and moral decisions are understood and exercised, we know that interpretations and reactions will vary depending on each individual being. The way a person thinks is clearly a reflection of such factors as inheritance, cultural exposure, physical environment, lifetime experiences, physical and mental health, extent of education, chronological age and spiritual sensitivity and convictions. Collectively, all play some role in forming the basis from which decision making through thought can take place. I identify all of this as contributing to our psychological capacity.

Ethics classified

There is need to differentiate among three various approaches to understanding ethics. *Virtue* ethics includes the 'ideals' that are established and learned. Those having stood the tests of time include honesty, courage, compassion, loyalty, generosity, fairness and even modesty. There are more. Some are more important, but all of them address the issues of life and how one being should behave in order to survive and get along with other beings. It is a shopping list that identifies characteristics that whole societies have collectively agreed upon, or that are clearly basic to human existence. They are ones that are not only basic to the idea of respect-for-persons, but are ones that free societies have agreed are good rather than evil. Only humans can deal with such issues, not animals.

Action ethics does something with virtue ethics. It's one thing to know what honesty is and how to understand it, but another matter to practice it. The minister that preaches honesty on Sunday but who cheats on Tuesday has passed the test of knowing a virtue ethic, but has failed in transforming it into action.

Value ethics is an attempt to evaluate the various virtues already mentioned. By approaching an objective evaluation of two given virtue ethics, for purposes of prioritizing them, the two are not only considered for action, but one ethic may need to take priority over the other when both can not be, for whatever reason, exercised. Probably the main reason will be because one is simply more important than the other, and it may not be possible to include both when making a specific decision. For example, it is likely that we would rate honesty over modesty. The tasks become more problematic when choices must be made between honesty and fairness. Perhaps such subtle distinctions are neither necessary nor practical!

There is really nothing magical about remembering that there are at least three approaches to ethics. However, it is important to remember that when ethical issues (such as the human/animal one) are considered, then we must reach back

to establish those ethics which clearly are related to the issue, establish some order of importance to each of them, and then activate them. A virtue ethic known but neither prioritized nor practiced is virtually meaningless. Most societies as a whole might agree that showing kindness among humans is an important ethic, but if the society does nothing in action or laws to prevent cruelty to animals (or to humans for that matter), then there is need for better education, or conversely, there is need to eliminate kindness as an ethic. You can't have both of them!

Ethical principles

There are at least four basic ethical principles (Beauchamp and Childress, 1989) and they help guide us in making decisions and exercising judgements about how we think about and treat humans and animals.

Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence suggests that the least any human can do in terms of behavior toward other humans or animals is to not inflict harm. Any treatment that would cause severe pain, suffering, sickness, malnutrition, and the like should be prevented. This principle even makes sense to the specieist farmer who understands the negative impact poor animal welfare has on economic profits. However, to distinguish non-maleficence from the next principle, to do no harm does not necessarily suggest that desirable welfare will be practiced. Therefore, the second principle is closely associated with non-maleficence except that it represents a positive approach.

Beneficence

Beneficence is when one should make every effort to promote animal welfare and insure that in all situations everything is done to help animals to have 'decent' lives. Regardless of their other ethical motives, the salesperson treats the customer kindly to insure greater probabilities of a sale, and the farmer treats animals with care for faster growth, greater prolificacy and more efficient conversion of feed to meat. But more importantly, they also do it because it is the moral thing to do -- the right thing to do.

Distributive justice

Distributive justice implies that the circumstances dictate the treatment provided, and that there be justice (fairness) in the distribution of good and evil. The basic standard of distributive justice is *equality* of treatment (Frankena, 1973). This does not suggest that we ought to treat all living beings identically, but that we surely ought to proportion out the contributions of well-being to both humans and animals. Much depends on which (morally relevant) similarities and differences between sentient beings are taken as a basis for similar or different treatment. The principle may be more applicable for humans than animals because it is related to insuring that each person should receive what is deserved. It may be impossible to decide just what an animal 'deserves'. This principle specifically refers to just distribution in a society structured by various moral, legal, and cultural rules and principles that form the terms of cooperation for that society. Some circumstances of injustice occur most under conditions of scarcity and competition, and trade-offs are common. The weighing of alternatives, especially involving risks

or costs and benefits, is typical in circumstances of distributive justice, which concerns not only aggregate risks or costs and benefits of various alternatives, but also their distribution throughout the society.

Autonomy

The final principle is that of respecting the autonomy of humans (Beauchamp and Childress, 1989) or respecting the integrity of animals (Rutgers, 1990). Autonomy is self-governance ... 'being one's own person', without constraints either by another's or by psychological or physical limitations. Autonomous actions and choices should not be constrained by others. The principle of respect for the integrity of animals has been introduced as an equivalent of the principle of autonomy of persons (Rutgers, 1990). Integrity of animals can be defined as the wholeness and completeness of animals and the state of balance of their species-specific nature that enables them to remain autonomous in their environment. Rollin (1981) argues that animals are entitled to respect for their 'telos' (nature, function, set of activities intrinsic to that species as has been evolutionarily determined and genetically imprinted). Respect in this sense indicates that humans should consider cows according to their 'living cowness' and pigs to their 'living pigness'. For humans relating with other humans, this should not be as much of a problem (even though we have to wonder at times), but for the radical specieist relating to animals, it is. As with humans, animals are not all alike. Due to the level of evolutionary development and general awareness that each species represents, the consciousness, interest level, and feelings, must be considered. Because the nervous system development is considerably greater in some animals than others with relation to the 'interest' factor (primates compared to earthworms), such a characteristic must be factored into the circumstances of determining the animal's intrinsic value. Respecting such intrinsic values in both humans and other animals (when detectable) is clearly a basic ethical principle worth remembering in the process of our better understanding and treatment of animals.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is that moral theory in which there is one, and only one, basic principle in ethics, the principle of utility. This asserts that we ought always to produce the greatest possible balance of value over dis-value, goodness over evil, pleasure over misery. Another way to describe it is that the end justifies the means. It would be quite appropriate to conduct acts of violence to man or animals if it could be demonstrated that the ultimate results of such actions would eventually be of a value to man or animals that exceeds the original pain and suffering that might have been initially inflicted. One of the basic problems with this approach is that the ultimate outcome may be uncertain or totally unknown. Thus, the original acts of violence may be speculative at best because the end utility remains obscure. Often times decisions made by humans concerning animals appears to be based on this utilitarian principle. I do not subscribe to such a theory when dealing with the ethics of meat production.

Deontology

The deontological theory appears more attractive in that it subscribes to the idea that some acts related to ethical principles are not necessarily based strictly on the theory of utility. Deontology suggests that some actions are right (or wrong) for reasons other than their consequences. Deontological theories rely heavily on

divine revelations, 'natural' laws and 'natural' rights (identified as virtue ethics), intuitions and common sense. To compare deontology with utilitarianism, utilitarians hold that only one moral relationship between persons, as determined by the principle of utility, is fundamental and this conclusion follows from the premise that all obligations are determined by the goal of maximizing good. Deontologists, however, take various relationships between people as more or equally basic. For them it is not sufficient to say that we should maximize the good, and that each person counts as one and only one. An example to illustrate the difference of the two theories is the story about two people (a scientist and a father) trapped in a burning building. Only one can be saved and the other will perish, so which should be saved? If the son of the father was a utilitarian, he might decide to save the scientist because the scientist might contribute more good (or utility) to society if his life is spared to continue experiments. However, if the son was a deontologist, he might very definitely save his father because of the greater intrinsic value he has for his father when compared to the scientist. As simple and theoretical as it may appear, perhaps this example provides insight on human/animal relationships since such decisions must be made when deciding on relevant importance of interests for man as compared to equally important interests for animals, especially when only one set of interests can prevail.

Interspecific justice

Donald Van De Veer (1979) has developed some interesting thoughts about interspecific justice that are particularly useful in describing the ways man relates ethical principles to animals when the 'push comes to shove' principle is invoked. He cites five relationships, two of which are especially attractive propositions.

Radical specieism

Radical speciesism (RS) is just that. It's likely that few humans could be so characterized, but it holds that RS humans believe that animals are objects having no interests, and that they are to be used by man for absolutely any purpose without concern to the animal. If the RS wished to put a puppy in the microwave oven as a sadistic form of entertainment, it would be ethically permissible.

Extreme specieism

Extreme speciesism (ES) is a modification of RS in that ES maintains that an animal does have certain 'interests' and 'needs' and is truly more than an object at the disposal of man. Nevertheless, when there is a conflict of interests between animals and humans, it is morally and ethically permissible to act that a basic interest of animals is subordinated for the sake of promoting even a peripheral interest of humans. When there is no conflict of interests, ES will act to promote animal interests (including welfare). However, it would not prohibit puppy cooking as long as such an act promoted some peripheral human interest.

Interest sensitive speciesism

Interest sensitive speciesism (ISS) is likely to represent a majority of people. It suggests that when there is a conflict of interests between an animal and a human, it is morally permissible to act in a way in which an interest of an animal is subordinated for the sake of promoting a like interest of a human, but one may not subordinate a basic interest of an animal for the sake of promoting a peripheral

human interest. In the case where a life raft is overloaded and about to sink and either a man or his dog will die (not both) before rescue, ISS permits the man to sacrifice his dog if he so chooses (a reflection of the 'when push comes to shove' idea projected earlier). Unlike RS and ES, ISS does not permit puppy cooking for the pleasure of watching them die. However, part of the problem with this approach is in deciding just how to evaluate and classify basic, serious and peripheral interests, especially when dealing with different species (pigs versus mosquitoes) having decidedly different developmental stages on the evolutionary ladder.

Species egalitarianism

Species egalitarianism (SE) is distinctly anti-speciesist. It holds that when there is a conflict of interests between an animal and a human it is morally permissible to subordinate the more peripheral to the more basic interest and not otherwise, regardless of which one is jeopardized; facts not relevant to how basic the interests are, are not morally relevant to resolving this conflict. I might even label this approach as being radical egalitarianism because it clearly gives animals equal status to humans when interests are considered and no concern is made about psychological capacities of various animals and how this might be considered in deciding an outcome when the basic interests of man and animals were at stake!

Two-factor egalitarianism

In two factor egalitarianism (TFE), the two specific factors in question are interests and psychological capacities. TFE holds that when there is an interspecies conflict of interests between two beings, A and B, it is morally permissible to sacrifice the interest of A to promote a like interest of B if A lacks the significant psychological capacities possessed by B. Furthermore, it holds that one can sacrifice a basic interest of A to promote a serious interest of B if A substantially lacks significant psychological capacities possessed by B. Finally, TFE holds that one can ethically sacrifice the peripheral interests to promote the more basic interests if the beings are similar with respect to psychological capacity (regardless of who possesses the interests). The attractiveness of TFE is that both 'interests' and 'psychological capacities' are given attention, and significance. However, the major limitation lies in how humans are to objectively evaluate these capacities and interests. Exactly what are the differences among basic, serious and peripheral interests, and, how are interests and psychological capacities to be identified? The extreme examples may be easily distinguishable, but some of those in between are less clear! For instance, our ability to identify the psychological capacities of an intelligent man, a dog and an earthworm should not be a problem, but where does the new-born infant human or the Down-syndrome human or the primate fit into this scheme? Perhaps exceptions can be justified for these circumstances as it can be argued that infants will eventually grow into normal adults which then, it can be argued, they will possess similar psychological capacities, whereas retarded humans will always lack the psychological capacities of 'normal' human adults. However, the retarded human still may be significantly more complex than that of a primate, especially when 'interests' are considered. If we accept the 'respect-for-persons' ethical principle, then it is even more clear that babies and handicapped persons come first. Nonetheless, making an effort to classify various types of interests and various levels of psychological capacities is difficult.

An important characteristic of TFE is that not any interest of any human, morally outweighs any interest of any animal, and TFE attempts to take into account both

the kind of interests at stake and also psychological traits of the beings in question. Being human is not assumed to justify preferential treatment of humans over animals (if you discard the 'respect-for-persons' ethical theory). For example, if there existed beings that were physiologically like apes except for their large brains and more complicated central nervous systems who had intellectual and emotional lives more developed than mature humans, then in a conflict of like interests, the interests of these ape-looking persons should take precedence.

Anthropomorphism

Do animals have interests? This is, a subjective matter. For humans to put themselves in the place of animals and try to decide on how these animals should behave, let alone think, and how these animals might like or dislike a particular stimulus (such as freedom to roam) is surely anthropomorphic, and likely to be invalid. However, this is not to suggest that animals do not have feelings, interests and rights, and perhaps there are methods to determine the answers, even if I can not identify them. They may not be and probably are not the same as ours, nor should they be, but there are many intrinsic and indirect evidences that many animals are not merely 'biological machines', but in fact, are sensitive, interest-baring creatures. This is especially convincing for animals having complex nervous systems. Research with primates and other mammals strongly support this, but much more is needed to strengthen such a hypothesis. The evidence for this in the lower vertebrates and certainly the invertebrates is much less convincing. It is essential to establish our views on this now, because in order to apply the ISS and TFE approaches (I have purposely rejected RS, ES and SE) described by Van de Veer, we must accept that at least some animals at least have intrinsic interests and certain psychological capacities. Otherwise, I would categorically have to accept the RS concept and terminate this discussion.

Interests of animals

If animals have interests, what are they? In my opinion and according to Tannenbaum (1989), there are several including the following: to be free of pain and suffering; to be nourished; to have the freedom of movement; to have companionship with other animals, especially of their own species; and to be protected from predators. There are more! They are interested in playing and being entertained; they are attracted sexually; and they are interested in being treated kindly and being included and recognized. But, are animals self-aware of such interests? Some studies suggest that chimpanzees may be, but it is difficult to detect this in most animals. However, just because their means of communication differs from ours, they are very able to communicate with their own species and others, including humans.

The apparent inability for us to detect self-awareness in animals is not reason to assume that interests are nonexistent. There are limits to such interests. Often times, human interests clearly outweigh those of animals. Moreover, not all animals have the same legitimate interests or have them to the same degree. This holds for psychological capacities too, because of variations in intellectual development among and even within species. Once we admit that some animals sometimes have interests above and beyond freedom from pain, we must be prepared to justify our decisions about when this is the case and when it is not.

Ethics of meat production

Breeding, growing, and slaughtering animals for food as well as to experiment with them so that meat desirability can be maximized is not new. Even though humans may not have always been omnivorous and certainly can survive without eating meat, it is the exception in most societies. The proportion of vegetarians is small in terms of affecting the demand-supply characteristics of meat. However, this is not to argue that vegetarianism is wrong or that meat eating is right.

However, there are a number of practices that need to be considered by our society, and especially by those that are involved directly or indirectly with meat production. Why? Because I think that everyone considering themselves as either ISS or TFE, should be intellectually aware that there are ways to think about the concept of using animals for food, especially if they are interested in the concerns of at least some consumers, and certainly the 'interests' of all animals. I believe that most of us should have an appreciation of why! Not only that, but meat scientists are so specialized that they only see one tiny piece of the system. They know where the raw product originated, but are so removed from it that they hardly realize there is a moral issue at stake. Then, when they read about animal rights demonstrations at the local butcher shop, they are totally awe-struck. How could they ever be implicated or why should they make it their business. I hope this presentation will help modify such attitudes.

Issues from conception to consumption

Is biotechnology acceptable? This new approach to animal production enables artificial breeding organizations to manipulate sperm, ova, fertilization, cloning, and gene-splicing to improve a species so that offspring are more efficient to produce food and fiber. Can such actions be considered morally acceptable? Is it right to develop a patentable animal that has been created through gene manipulations and ova splitting, has had its sex determined, and then has been carried to term in a surrogate dam?

At parturition, is it appropriate to early-wean the offspring so they can be raised more effectively or so their dams can be more efficient producers of milk? Even though usually very well cared for nutritionally, some young calves never nurse. Young piglets are removed from the sow at an immature age to prevent overlaying by the dam, so they grow more efficiently, and so the sow can be re-bred to account for a shorter generation interval. Are these practices ethically appealing?

What type of health care should animals receive? Should drugs be used indiscriminately to insure for economical growth, especially when management is questionable in unclean, poor nutritional environments? Are growth promotants such as hormone injections and feed additives important contributions in the name of modern husbandry? Should bred females be pregnancy checked and should teaser bulls be used to detect heat?

In many 'advanced' agricultural settings, the environment is totally controlled for animals to be born, raised and fed to market weight. This is called the confinement approach to animal production (sometimes referred to as factory farming) in which health, nutrition, sanitation, ventilation, humidity and temperature are monitored, disease is minimized and growth maximized to insure profitable production. The animals do not have opportunities to live in a 'natural' climate as did their ancestors. Laying hens spend their lives in wire cages and veal calves are tied in

small, dark stalls. Are these practices in the best 'interests' of the animals as well as the workers caring for them? What about the excess manure that is produced in these confinement facilities and then mechanically spread indiscriminately on farm land, creating unpleasant odors and polluting ground water? How do such practices affect the ecological balances with regard to ground-water pollution and air contamination?

At market time, animals are loaded into close confining trucks and hauled to packing plants where they may or may not be fed and watered before being moved with electric prods through narrow chutes where they are stunned to be quickly exsanguinated prior to evisceration. Their carcasses are either separated into skin, fat, bone and muscle immediately, or they are chilled over night and then separated into pieces for further distribution to the super markets as fresh cuts of meat, or delivered to meat companies that specialize in making sausages and cured products. If animals are to be used for food, then their lives must be sacrificed. This is the ultimate issue that is addressed here. Should humans eat the flesh of animals? Should scientists use similar animals to solve mysteries of muscle biology as they relate to meat technology? Should they use animals to enhance the efficiency and ultimate quality of muscle and related tissues as they are consumed by humans, and even other animals?

How do we cope with these issues?

When the issue of human/animal relationships confront us, especially when it interferes with either our beliefs, interests or conveniences, our psychological responses are activated. Even though we react differently to such stimuli, in general a common pattern is predictable.

First, we DENY there is a conflict and with time are confident it will disappear. Surely it must be a temporary delusion that has been overplayed or misconceived.

When it does not disappear, then our egos and self-centeredness generate *anger*. We are irritated because our best judgement, our traditional concepts of life and even our self-interests are challenged. If we are especially fragile, we become emotionally distraught since some of our secure ways of behaving have been damaged. Whether or not it is morally right for humans to consume the flesh of animals not only bothers us because we eat meat, but that we teach and research about the use of meat as a food. We encourage other humans to eat meat, and provide such reasons as our 'natural' omnivorous behavior, meat's nutritious and satiety value, the efficiency of converting unusable plant life into complete proteinous foods via animals (especially ruminants), and so on. We get mad! We become overly defensive in our efforts to rid ourselves of this 'uncomfortable' feeling.

However, after anger, we begin the slow but useful process of *reconsideration*. It can be a painful, embarrassing, but usually rewarding experience, especially if sound logic and common sense are used. That is why we need philosophical concepts. It is that portion of the encounter when we make every effort to resolve the issue in a manner that is a philosophical and psychological justification.

Finally, we come to grips with the issue and gain an *acceptance* that is reasonable to the best of our unbiased but subjective rationalization. I have experienced this and I suspect you have too.

It is important to address moral decision making. We already know that a moral principle must be impartial, universal and general. Moral rights must be consistent, have scope, be precise and be expressed in ways that our society can both understand and cope with. Therefore, we must first obtain the relevant *facts* about what the objectives are. What is to be accomplished? The question is, is it morally right to eat meat? What must be considered? The methods to resolve the issue must be clearly understood and included. The effects on not only humans, but on animals and the environment must be considered. We must find the answers how to differentiate among basic, serious and peripheral interests for both humans and animals. We must clarify the meaning of psychological capacities and their various levels for both humans and animals.

From these facts, we can make *judgements* using our best understanding of the philosophical concepts. Ethical principles and norms are to be decided. Our ideals, values, moral virtues and the basics related to the respect-for-persons ethics as we know and understand them are tested. We sort out the means for resolving the dilemma, and of the probability of attaining them. In making judgements, we also ask ourselves if what we have concluded is reasonable, and we have to remember that it is necessary to answer the basic questions. It is obvious that we must never shift the blame or responsibility to another unrelated issue that may have a different set of facts which require different arguments clearly not supportive nor correct about the basic issue.

Once the facts are known and a 'best' judgement is conceived, then the *decision* must be forth-coming, closely followed by a reasonable *conclusion*. One must and demonstrate authoritative determination by arguing the point with society, bringing the issue to a common vote within that society, making some concessions and compromises if appropriate (not to compromise basic and inherently important moral rights and beliefs, but only those aspects of the issue that have several reasonable but different answers), and then have dialogue to clarify and justify the merits and limitations of the decision made. The final outcome will be one of total acceptance, of total unacceptance or some intermediary compromise in which the society can live with. It is at this time, when the issue has been resolved, that it can then be put into societal practice as a moral right.

Now, do animals have rights in a way that humans have rights and is it permissible to eat animal flesh? I believe that the issue of animal rights is not clear and that persons must reach their own conclusions before they are collectively assessed in the society. The important thing is that these conclusions be based on objective, logical thought rather than on biases and emotions. I don't exclude the role that emotions play in decision making, nor do I condone that role. Simply put, emotions should neither dominate nor be used exclusively to resolve the issue.

In addressing the questions, I believe that it is important to discuss the rights issue because rights, and more specifically moral rights relate to moral values that have to do with our relationship with animals (see Regan and Singer, 1980). The only thing that can balance one right is another right. And, how does all of this relate to well-being? It does not, but we believe higher animals enjoy well-being to the degree that each can engage in activities typical of its species. If rights are determined either by agreements of mutual interest or by the respect-for-persons ethics, and animals are not able to either participate in these agreements or understand the basic moral virtues under consideration, then how can their interests give rise to rights? Philosophical ethics would argue that they can't and for the following reasoning: animals have less capacity for free moral judgement.

They are not beings of a kind capable of exercising or responding to moral claims. Animals therefore have no rights, and they can have none. The holders of rights must have the capacity to comprehend rules of duty, governing all including themselves. In applying such rules, the holders of rights must recognize possible conflicts between what is in their own interest and what is just. Only in a community of beings capable of self-restricting moral judgements can the concept of a right be correctly invoked. Equal justice is owed to those who have the capacity to take part in and to act in accordance with the public understanding of the initial situation. We can, of course, with consistency treat animals as mere pests and deny that they have any rights; and for most animals, especially those of the lower orders, we have little choice but to do so.

Then what about using animals for man's benefit? If animals do not have rights, or at least the rights that man possesses, than we must resort to our definition of rights. If it is man's right to live a healthy life, and if animals are needed for food or for experimentation to insure this healthy life, and without animals this would not likely occur, then the 'push comes to shove' principle must be invoked. This is not to suggest that the well-being of those animals should be ignored, but man's rights and needs and interests must prevail, and thus it is essential to 'shove' animals into a supportive role. The fundamental question to be asked is 'are humans more important than animals?' If you grant animals equal rights, then you must also accept the consequences. From yet another perspective, it seems that at least some animal rights advocates may be more concerned about supporting the 'movement' than about the well-being and rights of other humans. What the pejorative emphasis on speciesism suggests is a sense of the worthlessness of other people. However, one can't help but agree with those that suggest that what is really needed is not simply more legislation, law enforcement, and bureaucracy, but a change of heart and mind, an ethical transformation to a more humane, enlightened, and compassionate regard for all life. In fact, I believe that humans must first address the issues of how they treat members of their own species before they even begin to deal with those involving other species! The problem we encounter is where should one draw the lines between rights and well-being? The answer for me is clear, but it doesn't resolve itself easily nor completely objectively, free of lingering doubts.

Some final remarks and conclusions

Whether this argument has reassured you of your beliefs about moral obligations toward animals, will depend on you and you alone. I believe that at least some animals have inherent interests and some degree of psychological capacity, but neither of which are totally similar to or as important as those of humans. I also believe that both of these characteristics must be taken under advisement when making decisions relating humans to animals because it seems extremely plausible that there *are* some basic interests of animals that must be preferred over some peripheral interests of humans, to the extent that such interests must become a part of our societal behavior to accept. Animals that possess these interests and psychological capacities must be treated with care and dignity, and at minimum should be sparred of unreasonable pain, suffering and other basic properties of life that humans can easily accept and provide. These views suggest that I am either ISS or TFE. It is likely that in the final analysis, I identify best with ISS because the difficulty of identifying and evaluating the various levels of psychological capacities required to accept TFE is beyond my comprehension.

Perhaps in time I will change, and if I do, it will be toward TFE. Furthermore, an editorial published in Nature (1983) very clearly and concisely supports my conclusions. I have quoted excerpts from that article:

> *An animal is not a human being, nor an infant human being, nor a mentally retarded human being. An animal does not share human values, cannot grow up to be a being that shares human values, nor is a handicapped version of such a being. We need not even consider whether a healthy ape is a more free and feeling agent than a severely retarded human to recognize the uniquely corrupting effect on human values that comes of abridging the latter's rights. The real reason to defend the rights of severely handicapped humans is not that life is sacred in the abstract or that a being's ability to feel confers upon it an automatic right to exist; rather, it is the moral danger of allowing humans to pass arbitrary judgement on the rights of other humans. With good reason, we fear that society is unable to draw clear lines; crudely, once we admit the principle that select groups of humans can have their rights curtailed, it will not be long before someone will begin selecting on the basis of race, religion or political persuasion.*
>
> *Even the most ardent advocate of animal rights acknowledges, explicitly or otherwise, a hierarchy of species. The ardent animal rightist does not bemoan the millions of bacteria she kills when she takes a bath. The argument is not that rights for cows means bacteria must be allowed to vote; we all recognize the need to draw lines and we should all recognize the fallacy of the argument that it is impossible to draw a line in a continuum. The real objection to the animal rightists' view is that since we all recognize a hierarchy of species, why is it somehow morally compelling to draw the line between bacteria and insects, say, but morally reprehensible to draw a line between humans and all others?*
>
> *In honesty, we should acknowledge, too, that as humans we are a part of the natural world, a world that is in a constant state of tension and competing interests between species. We should resist the temptation of viewing the natural world as a blissful, magical kingdom, save only for man, a clod with heavy boots trampling the flowers. The 'sentient, purposeful' creatures of the wild lead difficult, violent, parasitized and short lives. Man's exploitation of animals for his own survival is hardly a perverse departure from the natural order. And, in the context of putting man's actions in perspective, those who oppose his exploitation of animals for research should ponder the 13.5 million dogs and cats that are put down in the United States each year for no reason whatsoever except that no one will take them as pets (in Britain, ten times as many are killed in this way as in laboratory experiments).*
>
> *None of this implies that human beings can treat animals as they choose. Perversion -- and corruption of human values of compassion -- undeniably comes from pointless cruelty to animals. That we recognize a moral obligation to treat animals with compassion and to respect their undeniable interests is evident in laws prohibiting cruelty and requiring the preservation of species from extinction.*

It is my opinion that the way we treat animals is often a reflection of how we may treat our fellow humans! But there are simply no consistent or universal principles that imbue animals with 'rights' as exercised by humans. Individuals may of course differ in their personal tastes, and there is nothing wrong with one's personal tastes, and there is nothing wrong with one's personal compassion outweighing any desire to eat meat, for example. But we should all eschew the self-righteous delusion that our tastes are universal moral truths.

This is the dawning of a new age of awareness. Today, more than ever before, most human societies have begun to realize that animals are more than objects of their amusement and use. Through the increasing popularity of pets and man's concern for their well-being, this has resulted in an avalanche of new thinking about how animals are to be cared for and respected for their basic intrinsic interests and needs.

Many segments of our society, especially those directly and professionally involved in meat science have either refused to consider or have failed to recognize the importance of thinking about the human\animal relationship. They have concentrated on defensive tactics that have usually proved counter-productive. This is particularly evident when efforts are needed to understand the perceptions of pro-animal rightist, and to develop a conscientious outlook on the entire matter. Not only would our society as a whole be the better off if the issues were understood with a logical, rational base, but, those directly involved in meat science would benefit through increasing productivity and minimizing unnecessary losses that could conceivably affect both short-term and eventually long-term profit structures.

Today, there is need to 'go back and pick up the pieces' by attempting to intellectually inform, reason with and educate people throughout the society on all unbiased and rational views on the ethics important to remember when thinking about and dealing with animals. From hunters to eaters, the story must be told. Tomorrow holds even a larger challenge. It will be essential to develop programs throughout our educational systems to insure that the next generation hopefully will be smarter and more concerned and more progressive in appreciating animals for what they are and for the important rolls they play in helping to insure a more secure, progressive society and world in which to live.

In closing, I have selected a statement by Linzey (In Rollin, 1981) that reflects, in part, my feelings on the matter:

> *I entirely accept that we are in a different, even morally embarrassing, predicament with animals. So deeply entrenched has our exploitation of them become that it is scarcely surprising that to think, and especially to act morally has become highly problematical. We hunt, ride, shoot, fish, wear, trap, eat, factory farm, and experiment upon billions of animals every year. I do not want to avoid this general point and suppose that it is an easy matter to extricate ourselves from more than a few centuries of hardness of heart, indifference, callousness, and anthropocentrism. None of us is morally clean when it comes to animals. Self-righteousness, therefore, is not only inappropriate but faintly ludicrous. But having accepted what Schweitzer calls 'our common guilt', what we all need is a program of personal, and collective disengagement from injury to animals. What should encourage us is the fact that the Judaeo-Christian tradition contains within itself the insight that the world is still in the process of being finished, and especially that God is not yet himself finished with us. If we take this deeply biblical picture to heart, then we may yet be able to cooperate with the spirit in the process of making a new creation. What Christian theology can and should do is to provide a vision of a new world. I accept that we have some difficult decisions to make before we even approximate that vision. I accept the need for compromise, given the constraints of the world as we know it. But I add this caveat: let us all compromise at the highest level.*

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