

## **Simplifying the Case for Vegetarianism**

In his book, *The Case for Animal Rights*, Tom Regan writes that a good moral theory must meet five criteria: consistency, scope, precision, conformity to reflective intuition, and simplicity.<sup>1</sup> But he offends against this last criterion by building his pro-animal case on the notion of "moral rights." Many philosophers simply reject the notion, and of those who accept it many deny that it applies to animals.<sup>2</sup> And so his defense of animals gets bogged down in what, I think, is needless controversy. For without using this notion, many of his conclusions can be reached on a basis that a vast majority of people would accept. In this piece I shall argue only that the case for the moral necessity of vegetarianism, one of Regan's major objectives, can be made in a far simpler way without offending against any of his other four criteria.

The popular rival to Regan's defense of animals is Singer's utilitarianism, something that Regan has extensively criticized, and I think rightly. But the case presented here is not utilitarian. It is a third alternative, one that I shall try to make using elements of his own method: intuition,<sup>3</sup> argument, and defense.<sup>4</sup>

### **1. Setting the Stage**

Begin with the following case. Suppose someone is walking down a road that divides a marsh when he sees a small turtle come out of the grass near him and begin to cross. He realizes that if he doesn't alter his stride he will step on it and crush it. Is it morally permissible for him to crush the turtle? Most of us would say no, clearly not. Whatever the reason, he should make the effort to put his foot down somewhere else. Now, suppose instead of a turtle there is simply a clump of dirt in his path. Is it morally permissible for him to step on it and crush it? Of course.

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The point of these examples is that at least in some cases, in the same situation we ought to treat inanimate objects and animals differently. There may be times when it may make no difference whether the object in question is a clump of dirt or an animal, but at least sometimes it does make a difference.

This in turn implies that there has to be some important difference between inanimate objects and animals. Logically, there has to be a difference between them that grounds the fact that we must treat them differently sometimes. But at this point it is not necessary to say what this difference is (such as that only the one has rights or can suffer). In pointing out what is clear to us, that we may step on the dirt but not the turtle, I simply draw attention to the fact that therefore there must be some difference between the two.

The fact that what is inappropriate in the first case is unobjectionable in the second implies the further fact that there must be a *morally* relevant difference between the turtle and the dirt. In other words, the cases show that animals are at least moral patients, or morally relevant objects. For only a morally relevant difference in the objects could ground a difference in the morality of the acts. We not only assess the cases differently, we judge that it is morally permissible to step on the dirt, but not morally permissible to step on the turtle. Something about the dirt makes it acceptable to step on it, but something about the turtle makes it not.

Simple as this may seem, someone might admit that it is wrong to step on the turtle but reject the idea that this is because animals are moral patients or morally relevant objects. Rather, one might say, it is simply beneath my dignity as a human being to kill an animal for no good reason. The wrongfulness of stepping on it doesn't really have anything to do with it, but with me. Also, one could claim, it is wrong to step on the turtle because such behavior toward animals might lead me to treat other human beings in a similarly heartless way, but not wrong because of anything about the animal.

The first of these reasons—aside from being *prima facie* contrary to our understanding of the recipient and nature of the offense in this case—implicitly grants what it explicitly denies,

namely, that the reason that it is wrong to crush the one but not the other has to do at least in part with a morally relevant difference between the two. For, if stepping on the turtle offends against human dignity while stepping on the dirt does not, then there must be some difference between these two to account for this. We could call this difference a "human dignity relevant difference." The objection, moreover, grants that offending against human dignity is what makes stepping on the turtle morally impermissible, this offense being missing in the case of the dirt. But in this way, the objection links the human dignity relevant difference between the turtle and the dirt to the moral difference between the two actions. And this implies that it is precisely this difference between these two objects that explains the different moral characters of the respective actions. Moreover, in this way, the objection admits that the human dignity relevant difference is a morally relevant one, since a morally relevant difference between objects is precisely one that at least partially accounts for a difference in the moral character of actions. So even under this view, even granting for the sake of argument that being beneath one's human dignity contributes in some way to the immorality of the action, something about the turtle accounts for the impermissibility of crushing it.<sup>5</sup>

The second alternative is an echo of a well known passage in Aquinas where he writes that the reason God wants man not to be cruel to animals is so that he will not in turn be cruel to his neighbor.

Now it is evident that if a man practice a pitiful affection for animals, he is all the more disposed to take pity on his fellow-men: wherefore it is written (Prov. xii. 10): "The just regardeth the lives of his beasts: but the bowels of the wicked are cruel." Consequently, the Lord, in order to inculcate pity to the Jewish people, who were prone to cruelty, wished them to practice pity even with regard to dumb animals . . .<sup>6</sup>

While it is important to recognize the connection between a willingness to be cruel to animals and a willingness to be cruel to human beings, it is not the sole or even the main reason that we would be appalled to see someone—our child, for example—go out of his way to step on the turtle. In fact, we would be offended by the senselessness of the killing and therefore worried about the

child. We recognize that the wanton destruction of life is itself bad even if the victim of it is a turtle. At the very least our concerns are twofold. We don't want Johnny to grow up to be cruel to people, and even if he wouldn't anyway, we want him to leave the turtle alone.

Suppose now that someone is driving down this country road and sees the turtle on one side and some kind of marsh plant on the other. Suppose that they are situated such that the driver can't avoid them both. There isn't time enough to stop but plenty of time to steer around one or the other, and no oncoming traffic. What should he do? We judge that all things being equal, he should steer around the turtle even though this means killing the plant.

This example illustrates a different point from the first, namely, that when we have to choose between the life of a plant and the life of an animal, we should, all things being equal, spare the animal. Again the reason for this is grounded in what the animal and the plant are. And again, at this stage in the argument, we don't have to be more specific than that they differ such that the animal's life takes precedence in such a situation.

Someone might object that in some cases the plant's life should take precedence, for example, when the plant is useful and the animal dangerous. This can all be granted for the sake of argument since it does not jeopardize the case for vegetarianism or the conclusion drawn above, which was "all things being equal" the animal's life takes precedence. Special considerations aside, if we have no choice but to kill either a plant or an animal, we ought to spare the animal.

## 2. The Case for Vegetarianism

Take a third example. Suppose someone wants to conduct a series of important experiments over a long period of time, and realizes that for her purposes either plants or animals will do. There is no appreciable difference. Suppose it is not any more convenient or expensive to use the one rather than the other. And suppose the experiments involve killing. Which should she experiment on? Again, we judge that if either will do comparably well, she ought

to use the plants. It would be wrong to kill animals when she can achieve her goals without killing them. This, again, is based on the idea that when it comes to a choice between an animal's life and a plant's, the animal's life takes precedence.

This example differs from the previous one in which the death of the plant or animal was simply unavoidable but served no purpose. Here the killing is avoidable. Also, in this case we are supposing that avoidable killing is sometimes justifiable, something most people would hold. (This is in contrast to the example of stepping on the turtle, where the killing was both avoidable and unjustified.) While we object to the *wanton* destruction of life, that is, killing for no good reason, most of us believe that not all killing falls into this category. It is certainly in line with our reflective intuition that while not just any reason suffices, still there is such a thing as a legitimate reason to take life.

Modifying this third example somewhat, suppose not that plants or animals will do equally well, but that plants are actually better suited for our scientist's purposes. She will be able successfully to gather the information she needs using either, but using plants will somehow facilitate her work. If in the original case she ought not to kill animals, then a fortiori she should not in this modified version. If the very reason that justifies killing at all is best served by killing plants, then, given that animals take precedence, that reason can only justify killing plants. And, questions of right and wrong aside, the legitimate—let us suppose—purpose she has for killing ought to lead her to choose the plants because of their superior utility. In this set of circumstances, the right choice should even be easy to make.

Generalizing, the moral principle we can derive from the example, then, is this: it is wrong to kill animals when plants will serve one's legitimate ends comparably well or better.

The case for vegetarianism can now be made. Like cases must be evaluated in like ways, and killing to gather important information is like killing to sustain health and maintain life. Both are important, but just as the scientist did not need to kill animals to gather her important information, so we do not need to kill animals for food to maintain our lives. Everything we need can be obtained from the vegetable or mineral kingdoms or from animal

products like milk and eggs that do not cost animals their lives.<sup>7</sup> Since we don't need to kill animals for food, we ought to spare them. Moreover, if we can believe the present findings of nutritional science, a vegetarian diet is positively better for us. So, just as the scientist was better served by using only plants, so are we better served by a vegetarian diet. A fortiori, then, we ought not to kill animals for food.

This, I think, is a rational basis for our obligation to be vegetarians. Before considering objections to it, we should notice that it is in keeping with Regan's method of problem solving in that it violates none of his five conditions for a good moral argument, namely: 1) consistency, 2) scope, 3) precision, 4) conformity to reflective intuition, and 5) simplicity:

1) The reasoning does not seem to be inconsistent in any way.

2) It covers many possible cases, and therefore has adequate scope.

3) The guidance it offers in decision making—that is, do not kill animals when plants will serve your legitimate ends comparably well or better—is concrete and easy to apply in many cases, and therefore is precise in Regan's sense.<sup>8</sup> "Comparably well" has, admittedly, an element of imprecision about it. Were this geometry, where one can expect absolute exactitude, it would be unacceptable. But this is ethics, and to require the kind of precision appropriate to math would be to overlook the difference between the two. With Aristotle it seems a point of wisdom to recognize that we must demand only that precision appropriate to the subject matter at hand. In the case of ethics, this would be to demand that the principle or criterion be specific enough to apply easily in many situations. The notion of alternatives serving one's ends "comparably well" is not in fact difficult to determine in most cases, and so it is acceptably precise.

4) It is intuitively satisfying in being founded on judgments that most people on reflection would make.<sup>9</sup>

And 5), it is quite simple. For it was not necessary for us to introduce the greatest happiness principle, or import the notions of rights, interests, desires, beliefs, or solve the problem of the relation of these latter to rights, let alone figure out whether animals even have them, or (worst of all) invent categories such

as "subject-of-a-life" (Regan) or "continuing person" (Tooley) or just "person" (Singer) with arbitrary conditions like having a sense of the future. Some (or none) of these may be lurking beneath the surface of the argument, as no doubt a whole host of logical, epistemological, metaphysical principles are, but just as the latter presuppositions need not be explicitly introduced and defended for the argument to have force, neither do the former. Why? Because, whatever the ethical footings may be, this much is clear to most of us: (we should not step on the turtle, we should not run over it, and) we should not kill animals when plants will do and a fortiori when they will do better. We have simply built our case for vegetarianism on a platform high off the ethical ground. But it is not any the weaker for that. It is as strong as the strengths of our reflective intuitions and the aptness of our comparisons. The intuitions are certainly reasonable and commonly held.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Objections and Clarifications

But the comparisons are faulty, it will be objected. For we eat for at least two legitimate reasons: 1) to maintain our lives, and 2) to enjoy ourselves. We are not obliged to be vegetarians, because without meat we can't achieve the second goal of giving ourselves pleasure.

This is patently false. A vegetarian diet does not consist in sawdust and ashes. By taking the trouble to put their feet down somewhere else than in the meat section of the supermarket, vegetarians discover very many foods they enjoy. So, the second of the reasons given for eating can easily be satisfied without meat.

Suppose, then, the objection were more realistic, namely, that we can't enjoy ourselves *as much* as vegetarians as we could as meat-eaters. We would miss meat, and so wouldn't get as much pleasure in our lives as we would if we killed animals and ate them. We are not obliged to be vegetarians because we can't give ourselves as much pleasure without meat.

Perhaps we should go back to the first example and suppose that the person just does not get as much pleasure out of altering his stride as he does from maintaining its rhythm. He'd still enjoy his

walk, of course, just not as much, if he took the trouble not to step on the turtle. Would this make it acceptable to kill the turtle? Perhaps it is too difficult to imagine a person who cared so much about such an insignificant pleasure that he would not be willing to spare the turtle's life. Then take the second example and suppose the driver would get more pleasure out of running over the turtle instead of the plant. This person should be quite easy to imagine. If he gets more pleasure out of the crunching splat of the turtle than the scarcely detectable flattening of the plant, does that make it legitimate to kill the animal? Or consider the scientist. Suppose she just doesn't get as much pleasure from experimenting on plants as she does from experimenting on animals. Suppose it's not that she likes to see animals die (or go splat), but that she just doesn't care much whether they live or die, and sometimes she gets bored and would like a change of pace.

This type of pleasure addition to our examples does not alter our evaluation of them in the least, because we judge that "more pleasure" is not a good enough reason to kill animals, because we think that not just any human benefit is worth an animal's life. Take the scientist's case. The little job boredom she faces is quite trivial and should be tolerated for the sake of the animals. (Besides, she is going to get bored killing animals too.) Also, she should have enough integrity as a scientist to care more about the progress of her work than the pleasure of doing the experiments.

All this applies to vegetarianism in an obvious way. Vegetarians maintain their lives and health well, and they enjoy their food as often and as much as their meat-eating brethren. Even if they miss meat sometimes, they put up with this for the sake of the animals. In this they are consistent with our intuitions in the above examples that not just any human benefit, certainly not just a little pleasure, is worth an animal's life. We should be willing to forgo the pleasure of experiencing the animals' flavor for their sake. In fact, the choice should be easy. Our attitude toward animals should be this: when it's either your life or my pleasure, I choose your life. Be well. The pleasures I can get elsewhere will do just fine.

It is worth noting the Glaukosean swap,<sup>11</sup> "gold for bronze," involved in killing animals for the pleasure of their taste, because it is remarkably callous and selfish. An animal's biological life is



its "gold," its very being in the sense that without it the animal loses everything it has. And although many of us believe in an afterlife for humans (and consequently that our earthly lives are not everything we shall ever have), few hold out any such hope that there is an afterlife for animals. In their case death is utter annihilation. Their lives, then, are their gold, their very being. The pleasure of tasting meat is our "bronze" (or wood or plastic or polyester). It is something we should easily be able to forgo, an ornament to human life at best, something that has absolutely no bearing on what makes our lives a success as human beings. For us it has no significance whatsoever. As such, this particular pleasure should not command so much concern that we are willing to kill for it. To kill an animal for the pleasure of tasting its flavor is to be willing to convert its gold into our bronze. And why? Because its gold is no good to us. It may be everything to the animal, but to us it is worthless.

This is certainly an example of selfishness. It is worth noting because habits of selfishness, no less than cruelty, translate into human suffering. And so we have here a Thomistic/Kantian type reason for vegetarianism. Either of these thinkers could well have warned us not to be so cold and selfish when it comes to animals, lest in promoting these habits we be disposed to treat people in like manner. Or, put positively, they could have pointed out that the generosity of adopting the vegetarian attitude—"You keep your life which is everything to you. I'll have some more of these beans here"—can only aid in fostering generosity and compassion toward our fellow men.

All this aside, we should recognize what life represents for an animal and consequently be eager that it keep it.

But perhaps I have falsely separated the purposes of eating—maintaining health and life, and giving pleasure—by attacking the latter purpose in isolation from the former. The actions of meat-eaters appear selfish and unjustifiable only in light of this false separation, in which it seems that they are willing to kill just for pleasure. Meat-eaters, the objection goes, are not killing animals just for the pleasure of their flavor, but also to maintain their lives. They have a very grave reason for killing. Their actions do not

appear either selfish or unjust when one realizes that they are killing not just for enjoyment but also for life.

Separating the two purposes as I have is quite defensible, however. Suppose doing X has two benefits, (a) and (b), and that Jane chooses to do X. Assuming that she is aware of (a) and (b) and desires them, we could suppose she chose to do X because of both. But so far we have considered her choice just by itself, that is, not in light of her alternatives. If there were an alternative, Y, which would give her (a) but not (b), then, assuming she was aware of it, her choice to do X would appear in a different light. This situation prompts an entirely new question. For now we could ask not simply why she chose X, but why she chose X over Y. The answer would be, because X has some advantage over Y. And what is this? (b) alone, because (a) also is available to her through Y. So while (a) might be a reason to choose X over nothing, it can't be a reason to choose X over Y. X wins out over Y because of (b).

The problem facing meat-eaters can now be properly understood. They are not asked why they choose to eat meat, but more precisely why they choose meat-eating over vegetarianism. The answer cannot be "for health reasons," or "to maintain life," because vegetarianism is at least quite, if not more, suitable for these ends. So why does meat-eating win out over vegetarianism? Because of some advantage it has that vegetarianism lacks, namely, a certain kind of pleasure. In the final analysis, the animal has to cough up its life, which is everything to it, for that. The shoe of selfishness fits here as well as it does anywhere.

More importantly, the above analysis can be used to show that a choice's alternative can affect the permissibility of the choice. Let us take a comparable case, self-defense, for example. Most of us would grant that it is permissible to kill in self-defense. Part of the reason is that such killing serves the legitimate purpose of securing one's life. But suppose there is another way to save one's life, say, by running away. Is it permissible to kill someone in self-defense when you could run away instead? Of course not. This changes everything. But why? Didn't we just suppose that saving your life is a legitimate reason for killing an unjust aggressor? Yes, in some situations it is, but certainly not when there is a non-lethal alternative.

Suppose that in a particular case killing an unjust aggressor would have two good effects for you: a) it would secure your life, and b) it would strengthen your character, making you more capable of handling yourself when unjustly treated (which is a good thing, too). Is it permissible to kill your attacker in this situation? If there are no alternatives, then yes. Well, suppose you can run away, but if you do you will miss out on (b). In other words, suppose there is an alternative that gives you (a) but not (b). Is it permissible to kill in this situation? Absolutely not, because (b) is nowhere near a good enough reason even though (a) under other circumstances would be. This means that in providing for (a) (saving your life), the alternative of running away effectively shifts the whole moral burden of the killing onto (b) (strengthening your character) as the sole justification for choosing to kill in this case. And (b) of course is utterly unable to justify it. So it is wrong to kill in self-defense in this case.

We have a similar situation in killing animals for food. It serves two purposes: a) maintaining life, and b) giving a certain pleasure. But because there is an alternative to (a) in vegetarianism, the whole moral burden of choosing to kill animals over vegetarianism shifts to (b). But (b) (killing for a certain pleasure) cannot justify killing animals. The pleasure of experiencing the animal's flavor is not worth its very existence.

#### **4. Further Strengths and Objections**

I mentioned already what I take to be some of the strengths of this argument, but there are others. First of all, this argument does not clash with our reflective judgment that sometimes the deliberate killing of animals for food is permissible. On hearing this case for vegetarianism, people often protest that if they or their family were starving, they would kill animals for food, as if the argument condemned this. It does not. Suppose you can't eat vegetables because they are unavailable or because you are allergic to them. In such cases one of the ingredients of the argument—that you can serve the legitimate end of sustaining your life without killing

animals—is not met. So the argument does not apply to these cases.<sup>12</sup>

As an aside, and as far as the argument presented here goes, it seems the obligation for most of us to be vegetarians is a new one. I suspect most peoples of the past did not have access year round to all they would need to live well without meat. And they did not have the knowledge of nutrition that we have today. The combination of modern farming and transportation has contributed to that common and distinctly modern phenomenon, the supermarket. The vegetarian finds here aisle upon aisle of foods to choose from year round without inconvenience or additional expense. And hence arise the conditions obliging him or her to live without killing animals for food. Of course, in parts or epochs of the world where these conditions are not met, the argument presented here does not support there being any obligation.

A second strength of the argument is that it does not raise the question of whether there is an essential difference between humans and animals in its defense of the latter. It skirts this issue altogether. Both Singer and Regan in their defense of animals devote considerable energy to arguing with some justification that the traditional dividing lines between humans and animals (language, rationality, and self-consciousness) are broad enough to include some animals and narrow enough to leave some humans out.<sup>13</sup> However, they do not show that there is no difference between all humans and all animals such that some legitimate ways of treating animals are never legitimate ways of treating human beings, no matter how enfeebled or undeveloped. The argument presented here obliges many of us to be vegetarians without addressing the issue of the difference between humans and animals. In this way, it places one less stumbling block in the way of those who, like the Christian philosopher, accept that there is an essential difference between man and the animals.

A third strength is that the argument supports the obligation of vegetarianism even apart from considerations of the pain and suffering of animals farmed and killed for food. We can assume for the sake of argument that all the animals in our examples would be killed instantly and painlessly, and still we judge the cases the

same. One should not step on the turtle or run it over, or use animals when plants will do and do better, even if one causes them no pain. But if we add the reality of the suffering of the animals marketed for food then, again, a fortiori, we ought to be vegetarians. Many people aware of the treatment of veal calves object to it and avoid calf products. Most of the other animals factory-farmed are mistreated as well. This is an additional reason to have no part in the killing of animals for food.

But, it will be objected, at least those animals exist. Think of all the animals who would have never seen the light of day were it not for the mass production of factory farms.<sup>14</sup> True, but ironically, even some of these never see it, or perhaps only on the way to market. The point is this. If an animal is suffering greatly and we cannot help it, we think it best that we "put it out of its misery." We judge it would be better if this animal ceased to exist than to continue in its present state. We can apply this to factory farming. It would be better if there weren't any such animals than that they suffer as these do.

Also, as Gruzalski points out,<sup>15</sup> if factory farming were eliminated and we as a society became vegetarians, it is not clear that animals would not increase in number. For much of the land we presently use to raise food to feed domestic animals could well lay fallow and thus accommodate a multitude of wild animals. In this case there wouldn't be cows and pigs hopping, burrowing, hiding from and preying on each other, but there might be many other animals, and these would be living animal lives. It is not clear then that the animal population would significantly decrease if vegetarianism were the norm.

Of course, there would be tremendous economic upheaval if society as a whole suddenly stopped eating meat, with so many jobs being linked to it in one way or another. Perhaps avoiding this upheaval is a sufficiently weighty reason not to require a sudden shift to vegetarianism. Perhaps it is not. Perhaps people ought to shoulder and weather these hardships.

It would depend on the concrete nature and extent of the problems caused. In any case, the hardships of a sudden shift to vegetarianism are at best a reason that the changes should not be imposed abruptly, as opposed to gradually. Perhaps the govern-

ment, for this reason, ought not to make factory farming illegal. But one by one individuals and families should turn away from meat for the sake of animals. The meat industry would then die a natural death and other work created by new demands and new necessities could fill the void. The objection is artificial for the individual making the decision whether to participate in the unnecessary killing of animals for food or to be a vegetarian. No one loses a job if I stop participating in the killing of animals for food by becoming a vegetarian.

## 5. Conclusion

The world is much changed since the beginning of the century. What was unthinkable then is routine today. In the wake of this may well come new obligations. I would argue that for many of us, one of these is vegetarianism. Technological advances have placed us in a situation our ancestors did not know. They did not have the alternatives we have today, or the corresponding opportunity to live as peacefully with the rest of creation as we can. While the production of a vegetarian diet involves, regrettably, the death of some animals—fields must be plowed, crops sprayed and protected—still, vegetarianism involves far less and no direct killing of animals for food. This opportunity is one we can well be thankful for. And it is one we should expect a peace-loving person to embrace.

## Notes

1. Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 131-40, 146-47.
2. R. G. Frey is perhaps the most notable of those who rejects Regan's argument at its base. See his *Interests and Rights: The Case Against Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
3. Appeal to reflective intuition, as Regan calls it, offends many philosophers, including Peter Singer. This is not the place to defend it, but only to point out that it is not difficult to find it at work in even its most outspoken opponents, like Singer. In his essay "Animals and the Value of Life," after

having used classical utilitarianism to argue that it would be wrong for a particular woman not to conceive a child, Singer, clearly criticizing the reasoning, writes: "All this is, again, very much at odds with our ordinary moral convictions." Of course he is right, but his *reductio* entails an appeal to intuition. See Tom Regan (ed.), *Matters of Life and Death* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 369.

4. There are still other alternative defenses of animals aside from Regan's, Singer's and my own. S.F. Sapontzis, for example, argues that our basic intuitions about 1) such moral virtues as compassion, respect, and courage, 2) the moral significance of reducing suffering, and 3) the importance of fairness in distribution of goods and opportunities imply that we ought not to treat animals as mere resources for satisfying our interests. See his *Morals, Reason, and Animals* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), pp. 89-110.
5. Perhaps the fact that all immoral acts are also beneath human dignity compounds their evil. But that an act that is unobjectionable on independent grounds could be evil simply by being beneath human dignity is unintelligible. In other words, how could what is itself an innocent act be beneath our human dignity?
6. *Summa Theologica*, I II, Q. 102, Art. 6. Repl. 8. See also Immanuel Kant, "Duties to Animals and Spirits," in *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 239 ff.
7. Kathryn Paxton George argues that there are seven classes of people comprising a majority of human beings whose health would suffer from "strict vegetarianism." See "So Animal a Human . . . Or the Moral Relevance of Being an Omnivore," *Journal of Agricultural Environmental Ethics* 3 (1990): 172-86. Whatever its merits or weaknesses, her piece addresses the viability of the "vegan" diet, i.e., one in which not just no animals, but also no animal products, such as milk or eggs, are consumed. The present paper claims only that a vegetarian diet—which just avoids eating the animals themselves—is quite healthy for normal people of all ages. The former may be controversial, but the latter is not.
8. One may of course mean various things by "precision," but Regan speaks of it in terms of "direction" (*The Case for Animal Rights*, p. 132). He contrasts it with "vague direction," and says that we can expect a moral principle to give us "specific and determinate direction." Again, "[i]f a principle is vague in what it requires . . . we will be uncertain of what it requires; and . . . we will also be unsure about what we must do to follow the principle's direction" (pp. 132-33). So he means by "precise" that a theory should offer clear direction in decision making. In view of this, it seems the moral theory of this paper is precise in Regan's sense. It is not difficult in most cases to know whether a particular action constitutes a violation of it.

9. I have not found among students, colleagues, or friends any disagreement on the intuitions. Discussions usually focus on whether they imply vegetarianism. I would be surprised if there were absolutely no disagreement about the foundational intuitions themselves, but equally surprised if they were widely rejected.
10. As Bernard E. Rollin says: "I cannot force my ideal . . . on you. I can, however, attempt to show you that are already committed to that ideal by virtue of certain assumptions you already hold, *and thereby show you that the ideal I am pressing upon you is in fact a consequence of beliefs you yourself entertain.*" See his *Animal Rights and Human Morality* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1992), p. 25 (my emphasis).
11. Homer tells us in book six of the *Iliad* how Zeus deprived Glaukos of his wits when he, Glaukos, exchanged his gold armor for the bronze armor of Diomedes.
12. Of course, while the argument here does not clash with the moderate view that it is permissible sometimes to kill animals for food, it also does not defend it. It leaves this moderate view open as a possibility. Charles Fink argues that the moderate view is inadequate if animals have basic moral rights. See "The Moderate View on Animal Ethics," *Between Species* 7 (1991): 194-200. Although I hold the moderate view, it is not my purpose to defend all aspects of it here. Here I wish only to argue that we don't have to settle the question of animal rights to know that at least we are obliged to be vegetarians when we have an alternative to meat-eating that provides for the maintenance of our lives.
13. Peter Singer, "Animals and the Value of Life," in *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 353 ff. Tom Regan makes frequent reference to the point in *The Case for Animal Rights*.
14. See James Cargile, "Comments on 'The Priority of Human Interests'," in H. Miller and W. Williams (eds.), *Ethics and Animals* (Clifton, N.J.: Humana Press, 1983), pp. 249 ff., for one of the stronger versions of this argument.
15. Bart Gruzalski, "The Case Against Raising and Killing Animals for Food," in Tom Regan and Peter Singer (eds.), *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989), p. 179.

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