

**ANIMAL SUFFERING IN FACTORY FARMING
AND THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT IT**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
in
THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
of
RHODES UNIVERSITY

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February 2005

Abstract

This thesis moves beyond the traditional approaches of how we ought to treat animals, and instead concentrates on the best strategy for preventing animal suffering in the farming industry. Chapter 1 considers the question of how we can know that animals feel pain, and concludes not only that it is rational to believe that they can, but also that this is a significant fact. Chapter 2 then analyses one possible strategy for helping to prevent animal suffering, namely demi-vegetarianism. For a number of reasons, however, this strategy is found to be flawed, therefore Chapter 3 analyses a second possible strategy, namely vegetarianism, and concludes that this is, in fact, the best strategy for helping to prevent animal suffering in the farming industry.

Acknowledgements

Thank you, firstly, to my supervisor Marius Vermaak for all his wisdom, guidance and patience during the year, and throughout my degree.

To those in the Philosophy Department at Rhodes University who contributed positively in one way or another to this project, in particular Francis Williamson, Ward Jones and Samantha Vice.

To my colleagues and comrades who provided insight, clarity and, above all, friendship, especially Chris Wareham, James Vos, Richard Flockemann, Lucy Shapiro, Nikolai Viedge, James Gore and Beatrice Toniolo.

To Pen, for all her love and support, and for always reminding me that compassion needn't be reasonable.

And finally, to my family, and in particular my parents, without whom this would not have been possible. I thank them for all their support, both emotionally and financially, and for caring so much.

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is twofold. I will firstly show that it is rational to believe that animals can suffer, and that this conclusion has significance. Because of its significance, I will then assess what the best strategy for preventing the suffering and promoting the happiness of these animals would be. The two strategies I will consider are vegetarianism and demi-vegetarianism.

The topic of the treatment of animals has, traditionally, been approached in two ways.¹ Firstly, the utilitarian approach assesses the treatment of animals in light of a desire to maximise utility or happiness. Secondly, on the deontological account, animals are seen as ends in themselves, with their lives having an inherent value independent of their benefit to humans. I will give a brief outline of these two approaches, and I will then explain why a new argument is needed to change the way we treat the animals that we raise for food.

Peter Singer is the leading utilitarian defender of animal well-being. Singer argues that factory farming causes vast amounts of pain and suffering for the animals involved. Since the animals in question are sentient and can experience pain, they have an interest in avoiding this pain. Singer, however, extends what he calls the "Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests"² to animals. Because their interests are given equal consideration, we therefore ought to end many of the practices that cause them suffering, especially factory farming.

He gives two arguments for this principle. Firstly, he presents an argument from the marginal cases. There are some properties that only humans have that give their interests more weight than those of animals, for example, being rational or autonomous. However, not all humans have these properties. Consider infants or the mentally disabled

¹ There are alternative perspectives on the issue. For example, in 'Eating Meat and Eating People' (in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*. 1995. The MIT Press.), Cora Diamond disagrees with what she calls a certain sort of argument defending the rights of animals. This "Singer-Regan approach" as she calls it is the same approach taken by most scholars working on this issue. She says that such arguments say nothing about eating the meat of an animal that, for example, died naturally. But this, she insists, is just as wrong, purely because it is the eating of flesh. I note this merely to show that there are other, more intuitive ways of approaching the subject of animal welfare, but I will not discuss them in this thesis.

² Singer, P. *Practical Ethics*. 1993. Cambridge University Press. p. 21

for example. So if this is what gives human interests more weight, then it follows that not all humans are equal after all. We therefore have two options: either we have to lower the bar as it were and choose other properties, such as sentience, which then gives animals equal consideration of interests, or we must be content with the marginal cases not having equal consideration of interests. Singer opts for the former, and concludes that all animals are equal, human or otherwise.³

Secondly, Singer argues against the relevance of those properties that are used to give human interests more weight. Marking the boundary of concern for the interests of others with anything more than sentience, e.g. rationality or intelligence, would be to mark it in an arbitrary way. Why not, he asks, “choose some other characteristic, like skin colour?”⁴ In such a case it would be racists who violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of their own race. And similarly, “speciesists give greater weight to the interests of members of their own species”.⁵ Therefore, according to Singer, because their interests have equal consideration, we should try to prevent the unnecessary suffering of animals.

It can be argued, however, that utilitarianism is the wrong way to approach the issue. Firstly, utilitarian arguments in favour of giving up eating meat may in fact conclude the opposite, i.e. might actually promote disutility. For example, R. G. Frey has argued that the demise of the meat industry and a wholesale conversion to vegetarianism might be catastrophic to human welfare, and so could not be given a utilitarian justification.⁶ His utilitarian calculation in fact yields the opposite: that “we are permitted to eat animals at will”.⁷

Secondly, there is a problem with utilitarian calculations themselves: they reduce the issue to empirical details and hence make it contingent. The right thing to do, according to the utilitarian, is based on unpredictable factors like the number of humans eating meat, the number of animals being eaten, and the positive and negative mental states attendant on a wide variety of animal husbandry situations and human living

³ Wilson, S. ‘Animals and Ethics’, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2001
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/a/anim-eth.htm> p. 12

⁴ Singer, 1993. p. 58

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 58

⁶ Frey, R. G. *Rights, Killing, and Suffering*, Basil Blackwell, 1983.

⁷ Curnutt, J. ‘A New Argument for Vegetarianism’ in *Ethics for Everyday*. Benatar, D [Ed]. 2002. McGraw-Hill. p. 406

conditions.⁸ To base a theory of animal welfare on utilitarianism is therefore to base it on contingent, and at times unclear and unmanageable, factors.

Perhaps then the deontological approach is a better way to view the issue. The leading rights-based theorist, Tom Regan, argues for the claim that animals can have rights, and indeed should have rights, in much the same way as humans do. He concentrates on an individual's "inherent value"⁹ and aims to show that animals have the same moral status as human beings. This moral status is grounded in rights; "all who have inherent value have it *equally*, whether they be human animals or not."¹⁰

According to Regan, any being that is a subject-of-a-life is a being that has inherent value, and we ought to show respect toward such a being. This precludes using them as means to an end, and certainly makes killing these beings wrong. The subject-of-a-life should therefore be treated as an end in itself, with rights.

Being the subject-of-a-life involves being conscious, with a wide variety of mental states, such as preferences, beliefs, and a sense of self and the future. Regan argues that the property of being a subject-of-a-life is one that all human beings have. But, more importantly, this is a property that many animals possess too. His conclusions are therefore clear and uncompromising: every being that satisfies the above criteria, and is therefore the subject-of-a-life, should have rights and deserves the same respect and treatment. According to such a position then, there is a fundamental wrong in farming animals for food.

This rights-based approach is, however, also not without its problems. Firstly, Regan identifies rights-holders according to certain capacities, but other writers have given different capacities for identifying a rights-holder, capacities that are more cognitive in nature, such as rationality or language. These would disqualify animals from having rights.¹¹ There is also concern over the nature of inherent value, and what this term actually means. Some argue that Regan's use of the term is inconsistent, and even implausible, when the rights of humans and animals come into conflict.¹² This suggests

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 407

⁹ Regan, T. 'The Case for Animal Rights' in Singer, P. [Ed] *In Defence of Animals*. 1985. Blackwell Publishers. p. 19

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 23

¹¹ Curnutt, 2002. p. 408

¹² *Ibid*, p. 408

therefore that the deontological approach to animal welfare is just as problematic as the utilitarian one. Moreover, these two approaches have done battle with each other for quite some time, and in the literature the debate remains unsettled.

But there is a more fundamental worry with approaching the issue of animal welfare from either of these two positions. Bernhard Williams argues that these approaches are flawed because they give animals equal status, when all we need to determine is how they should be treated.

He argues that to see the world from a human point of view is not an absurd thing for humans to do. It is sometimes said that such a view implies that we regard ourselves as the most important beings in the universe, or that we have the most value. But this is absurd; it makes no claims about the importance of humans in the universe, just about the importance of humans to humans. Therefore, although 'speciesism' is the term that has been used to describe an attitude in favour of humanity at the expense of other species, it should more revealingly be called 'humanism'.¹³

Williams claims that a concern for nonhuman animals is certainly a proper part of human life, but "we can acquire it, cultivate it, and teach it only in terms of our understanding of ourselves."¹⁴ Because we have such an understanding and are the objects of it, our ethical relations to each other will always be different from our relations to other animals. So when we question how animals should be treated, we must realise what we are asking: 'how *they* should be treated?'. The choice can therefore only be "whether animals benefit from our practices or are harmed by them."¹⁵ While there are good reasons for not inflicting pain on animals, no particular point is made by grounding this in rights or by giving animals equal status.

Therefore, what is needed is a move away and beyond these traditional approaches, so that the old debates are not constantly rehashed and old mistakes are not continuously made. In the approach I will take, the interests of animals count directly in the assessment of actions that affect them, but this does not mean that the interests of animals are equal to or count for as much as the interests of human beings. Singer is correct in claiming that animals' interests count directly because animals are sentient, and

¹³ Williams, B. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. 1985. Fontana Press. p. 118

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 118

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 118

therefore capable of feeling pain. But, while this is directly relevant to a sentient being's interests, those reasons need not be equal in order for us to realise that an animal's suffering ought to be prevented. So, a person's interests may well count more than an animal's interests, but this does not mean that we can do whatever we like to animals. Rather, the fact that animals are sentient gives us reason to avoid causing them unnecessary pain and suffering.

Furthermore, a discussion of the methods of protecting animals is one that has not been given due consideration. The complex questions of equality of interests or the rights of animals often leaves little thought for the more pragmatic ways in which animal exploitation can be minimised or prevented. Therefore, my project will concentrate on the immediate goal of preventing the suffering of those animals that are farmed for food.

In Chapter 1, I will assess various arguments from the philosophy of mind in order to establish whether we can have knowledge of other minds, and also whether we can know, with any plausibility, that animals feel pain. I will show that, at best, we can conclude that it is rational to believe that animals can feel pain. Moreover though, I will also argue that this fact is a significant one, and should indeed matter to us. Having established this conclusion, the next two chapters are devoted to analysing the best way to prevent, or at least minimise, the suffering of the animals that we raise for food. In Chapter 2, I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a first possible strategy, namely demi-vegetarianism. In Chapter 3, having argued that demi-vegetarianism is an unsuccessful strategy, I turn to assessing vegetarianism as a possible strategy for helping to prevent animal suffering. I aim to show that vegetarianism is indeed the best possible strategy to adopt to help prevent the suffering of the animals in question.

Chapter 1

How do we know that animals feel pain, and, if they can, what significance does this have?

In order to establish whether we can know anything about animal pain, we must first establish that we can know anything about other minds at all, whether they be human or animal. I assess various arguments from the philosophy of mind that show that it is rational to believe that others have minds. I then argue that it is possible that we can know that an animal is in pain. No theory of the mind, however, allows us to know *for certain* that other minds exist, or that animals can feel pain. A good theory of the mind can show only that it is plausible to conclude that other minds exist, and that animals feel pain. Therefore, in light of this uncertainty, I will also argue that, taking everything into account, it is more rational to assume that animals feel pain than to doubt this. I will then provide a brief description of one concrete case where it is rational to believe that animals are in fact suffering, i.e. when they are factory-farmed. And finally, I argue that this conclusion is significant and gives us reason for action.

There are two ways we can go about ascertaining whether other minds exist, and thus whether animals feel pain: by inference and by direct observation. But before we start assessing the arguments, there are two points that must be made. These are important because they provide a justification for the link between the conclusions that other minds exist and that animals feel pain.

Firstly, the animals in question (namely mammals and birds) are sufficiently physically similar to us, especially with regards to a capacity to feel pain. They have nervous systems very like ours, and their physiological response is very similar to our own in circumstances in which we would feel pain. For example, there is “an initial rise of blood pressure, dilated pupils, perspiration, an increased pulse rate, and, if the stimulus continues, a fall in blood pressure.”¹⁶ Furthermore, the part of the brain where humans are superior to other animals, the cerebral cortex, is not concerned with the basic impulses and feelings associated with pain, but rather with thinking functions. The

¹⁶ Singer, P. *Animal Liberation*. 1975. Avon Books. p. 11

impulses and feelings associated with pain are located in another part of the brain, the diencephalon, which is well developed in many other species of animals, and especially in mammals and birds. Moreover, the nervous systems of other animals evolved as our own did, and "the evolutionary history of human beings and other animals, especially mammals, did not diverge until the central features of our nervous systems were already in existence."¹⁷ Also, this capacity to feel pain had an evolutionary function. A species' prospects for survival are much better if it has the ability to feel pain, since this causes members of the species to avoid sources of injury.

Secondly, it is impossible to know of another's pain in the same way I know my pain. This will be shown in more detail later, but the arguments assessed in this paper, in one way or another, all conclude that others can feel pain based on some sort of behaviour we observe. That is, the only way we can know of another's pain is when we see them exhibiting that pain and, as will be shown, pain is either inferred from behaviour or directly exhibited through behaviour.

Thus, if we can show that other minds exist, and that other humans can feel pain, then the above two points enable us to make the further conclusion that animals too can feel pain. In other words, I know that my friend feels pain, and, because animals have a similar physical make-up to us and because their pain is exhibited in the same way as humans, through behaviour, then it is plausible for me to also conclude that animals feel pain.

1. How can we know that animals suffer?

i) Inferential Accounts:

The first way I can know that another feels pain is by inference. One way to explain this is the argument from analogy. John Stuart Mill is one proponent of this argument and it is also the view that Singer takes in *Animal Liberation*. There is one case, so the argument goes, in which I have direct access to both behavioural and mental states, and that is my own. Is it not possible then that, based on my knowledge of my own case, I can reason outwards as it were, to descriptions of others' behaviour and others' mental states? In

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 11

other words, I can know that other beings feel pain – that they are sentient, have feelings – because firstly they are physically similar to me (my body is an antecedent condition of pain), and secondly they exhibit the behaviour, show the outward signs, which in my own case I know by experience to be caused by pain. So, when I feel pain I know how I act, and when I see those actions in another being I can infer from analogy that they are in pain. The assumptions in such an argument are a) I can feel pain, b) there is a connection between my experience of pain and the behaviour that I exhibit, and c) the observation of similar sorts of behaviour in others.¹⁸ The missing part then is what I infer: others can feel pain too.

Although it is a standard proposal for knowing others' mental states, there is one serious difficulty with the argument from analogy, which should make us wary of accepting it. The problem is that it represents one's knowledge of another's pain based on an inductive generalisation from exactly one case. That is, it is an inductive inference based on only one case, my own. This, says Churchland, is the weakest sort of inductive argument, "comparable to inferring that all bears are white on the strength of observing a single bear (a polar bear)."¹⁹ Or as Carruthers puts it, "it is rather as if the first person ever to discover an oyster had opened it up and found a pearl inside, and had then reasoned that all other oysters will similarly contain pearls."²⁰ Indeed, we are not entitled to draw any conclusions from just one case, and we should have very little confidence in the existence of other minds based on such an argument. Knowledge of animal pain must therefore come from something more solid than an inference based on one instance if it is to be at all plausible.

There is also a more general problem with the argument from analogy that must be addressed: the problem posed by Cartesian scepticism. The starting premise in the argument from analogy is always one's own mind, and we then infer other things from that. Cartesian scepticism, however, argues that we cannot know anything about other minds, and we certainly therefore cannot know that animals feel pain.

¹⁸ Avramides, A. *Other Minds*. 2001. Routledge. p. 4

¹⁹ Churchland, P. *Matter and Consciousness*. 1994. p. 69

²⁰ Carruthers, P. *Introducing Persons: theories and arguments in the philosophy of mind*. 1986. Croom Helm. p. 13

But there is a major flaw with this sceptical position. By asserting that all we can know is our own mind, sceptics argue that we cannot know of other minds at all, whether they are other humans or animals. They are forced to concede then that we cannot know that another human is in pain. So scepticism not only provides a philosophy of mind that refuses to acknowledge the suffering of animals, it also refuses to acknowledge the suffering of other humans too. Not only do we lose morality regarding animals – how we ought to treat animals – we also lose morality with regards to how we treat each other. Scepticism therefore has unacceptable implications: if it is correct, then morality is impossible. The conclusions it draws with regard to other minds and animals' ability to feel pain should therefore be rejected. I will provide arguments later that operate outside of this Cartesian framework of starting from my experience. Because the sceptic specifically attacks this move, starting differently will make this worry disappear.

We have concluded so far that the argument from analogy is not a good way to determine whether animals feel pain, and that scepticism should not be taken seriously in determining whether other minds exist. There is another argument from inference that does not fall prey to the same problems that the argument from analogy does. This is inference to the best explanation.

Once again, it is important to emphasise that there is a conceptual connection between having certain mental states and being disposed towards certain sorts of behaviour. You cannot ascribe a certain state to a being without at the same time ascribing various behavioural dispositions to that being. A mental state like pain characteristically leads to or is otherwise implicated in the production of specific behaviours, in this case pain-behaviour.

Now, when an animal exhibits behaviour that we would normally associate with pain, e.g. writhing around on the ground, then the inference that the animal can feel pain is justified because it is an inference to best explanation. Unlike the argument from analogy, which is only based on the one inference, inference to best explanation is based on all the other times that I have seen such behaviour exhibited, and having weighed up all possible explanations, this one is the best. Such an explanation involves a simple application of Occam's Razor: use in your explanation only those features that are minimally required to account for the phenomenon. So, in other words, we should not

complicate the issue by trying to find other possible explanations when one will suffice. For example, I see my dog exhibiting specific behaviour that I associate with pain. From this behaviour I infer that she is in pain. When I observe my dog engaging in such behaviour, it seems plausible to suggest that all that is required in this case is an ascription of relatively simple mental states. I need not attribute to her deep thoughts and complex conjectures. In this case, inferring that she is in pain is an inference to the best explanation.

Inference to best explanation is more plausible than the argument from analogy because it does not fall prey to the same objection. Moreover, it occupies a middle ground between direct explanations of how we can know that animals feel pain and explanations by inference. This is because the inference is not made based on my experience of pain, but is based on my direct observations of the behaviour of the animal. Such behaviour is assessed independently and an inference is made.

However, inference to best explanation is not conclusive when it comes to the question of how we can know if animals experience pain. An inference to best explanation will sometimes be false. For example, if I observe my dog lying on the floor moaning softly, I may conclude via inference to the best explanation that she is in pain. But I might be wrong about this, she may just be dreaming and the behaviour she is exhibiting is very similar to the behaviour of being in pain. I will elaborate on this objection in a moment when discussing behaviourism.

Despite this difficulty, inference to best explanation is certainly a useful way to determine if an animal is in pain, and, moreover, it is a practical, commonsense answer to this problem, and the problem of other minds in general. Inference is one way of providing an answer to the question of whether animals can feel pain. At best this strategy is useful, but both the argument from analogy and the inference to best explanation have their problems. The other way we can know whether an animal feels pain is through direct observation, and I will discuss three theories of mind that show how this could be the case. These positions are in opposition to the inference strategy, and especially the argument from analogy. They operate outside the Cartesian framework of starting from one's own mind and instead assess the behaviour of others directly. The first theory of mind I will discuss is logical behaviourism.

ii) Non-inferential Accounts:

According to logical behaviourism, a claim about a mental state can be reduced, without losing any meaning, to an explanation about what observable behaviour results, or would result, if the being was in that observable state. It gives us knowledge of others' mental states by referring to these mental states in purely behavioural terms. There is simply nothing to our conscious states over and above behaviour and dispositions to behave. So, to be in pain is just to moan, wince, scream; it is just whatever behaviour is exhibited. Mind is behaviour and behaviour is overt, and it is in this way that the explanation of being in pain is direct, and not based on inference. To understand behaviour is to understand mind.

On the surface, behaviourism seems like a quick and easy way to determine that animals can feel pain, but it does have some fundamental problems. Firstly, it ignores, and even denies, the 'inner' aspect of our mental states. Pain, especially, has an intrinsic qualitative nature that is revealed in introspection. Denying this leaves out a big part of the experience of pain, and as such the explanation seems to be lacking. One cannot say that an animal is in pain if what one is referring to is just behaviour, while leaving out the qualitative nature of the experience.

This leads to a second problem. As with inference to best explanation, we may be wrong about what the behaviour is actually suggesting. For instance, if we say that the behaviour of lying down and moaning means that the dog is in pain, then we don't have a very good explanation of how we can know an animal is in fact in pain, for the dog might just be dreaming. In fact, by this view, anything that exhibits pain would by definition be in pain, even if there were another explanation.

Finally, we ordinarily think that mental states like being in pain are the causes of our behaviour and behavioural dispositions. For example, if a dog howls with pain, we normally think that the pain itself is not this behaviour of howling, but is rather the cause of the behaviour. So, especially with regard to dispositions, behaviourist pain seems to get everything back-to-front. That is, if one is in pain, that pain cannot itself merely consist in the disposition to act. As Carruthers argues, pain is instead the positive state,

which is the *cause* of that disposition, and someone is disposed to behave because they are in pain (rather than their disposition being the pain).²¹

Functionalism is an attempt to overcome some of the problems that behaviourism faces. Functionalism is similar to behaviourism, but it includes an integral step that makes it a more plausible theory of the mind. Functionalism argues that each mental state “is a state consisting of a disposition to act in certain ways *and to have certain mental states*, given certain sensory inputs and certain mental states.”²² So it is similar to behaviourism in that it incorporates behaviour and dispositions to behave, but it also fully recognises the existence of mental states as causal constituents of behaviour. Mental states are not identified with dispositions to act, but rather just associated with dispositions to act. There is a causal antecedent – sensory input, such as stubbing your toe – and this results in the mental state of pain, which is a state of the entire system. This, in turn, then causes the system to bring about any of a range of probable outputs, such as screaming or hopping around. Also, a system can be in more than one state at any given time, e.g. hungry, angry and in pain. Functionalism’s appeal is that, in addition to inputs and outputs, it recognises the causal roles played by the internal states, something that, as the final objection just showed, is lacking in behaviourism.

So, functionalism analyses mental states in terms of their functions, e.g. the normal function of pain is to be the causal intermediary between a specified bodily cause and a specified sort of behavioural effect. Pain should be analysed in terms of a causal role mediating between a specified input (injury) and a specified output (groaning).²³ So we can know that an animal is in pain because we understand pain to be a state that is caused by injury for example, which normally causes a disposition to pain-behaviour. Unlike behaviourism, the mental state of pain is not just behaviour, but rather the cause of that behaviour. And likewise, the cause of the pain is also some antecedent event involving injury or trauma.

Functionalism is at its most plausible when providing third-person analyses of mental states, and this is exactly what we want with animals. But there are problems with the first-person description. That is, I do not assess my pain in the same way as I would

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 109-10

²² Phillips, H. E. *Vicissitudes of the I*. 1995. Prentice-Hall, Inc. p. 72

²³ Carruthers, p. 112

do the animal's pain. I do not judge that I am in pain by observing my own physical circumstances and behaviour. Functionalism, then, seems to fall prey to one of the same problems as behaviourism: it does not fully capture the mental state that is pain because it does not account for the inner aspects of mental states, or qualia. As Churchland says, "by attempting to make its relational properties the definitive feature of any mental state, functionalism ignores the 'inner' or qualitative nature of our mental states."²⁴

Carruthers gives one way that functionalism might meet this problem. To overcome this problem, it must be shown how a first-person description of mental states has the same sort of content or meaning as a third-person description. One could say that the experience of something like pain in the first-person and third-person cases is actually not so different. That is, introspection actually lacks any "phenomenological content"²⁵ that would make my pain different to another's pain. What makes it seem like we have a different sort of feeling or sensation in the first-person is actually just intuition: we have the capacity to get it right most of the time. So injury for example will cause the mental state of pain, which results in an intuitive awareness of pain and a disposition to pain-behaviour in both myself and the other. I argue, however, that this does not seem to map with our experience of pain. Judgements that I am in pain are made on my felt awareness of pain, and are not merely intuitive. Denying phenomenological content seems to be to deny what pain actually is. This proposal could only be adequate if sensations and experiences lacked any distinctive qualitative feels, which they clearly do not.

While it still has this problem with our qualitative feel of pain, functionalism has, so far, provided the best explanation of how we can know that animals feel pain. This is because it does at least give a plausible third-person analysis of mental states. There is, however, a philosophy of mind that attempts to show how a first-person description of mental states can have the same sort of meaning as a third-person description. It is an argument, developed by Wittgenstein, that concentrates on language.

The Wittgensteinian approach, like the other direct approaches we have been assessing, turns its back on the Cartesian tradition of starting with one's own mind. Instead it assesses the other minds debate within the framework of language use. We

²⁴ Churchland, p. 38

²⁵ Carruthers, p. 117

come to understand our world and the world of the other by looking at the way we interact with one another. The way we learn our language and use our language creates what Wittgenstein calls an asymmetry in use. In spite of this asymmetry though, there is still what he calls a “univocity of meaning”.²⁶

Both behaviourism and functionalism succumb to the problem of this asymmetry in our experience of pain. That is, they can give a third-person description of pain, but struggle when it comes to giving the same description to the first-person. According to Wittgenstein, however, the asymmetry in our first-person and third-person accounts exists only in our language. In other words, a description of toothache in the first-person is indeed different to a description of toothache in the third-person. However, another’s toothache is toothache in the same sense as mine. An asymmetry in use does not imply an asymmetry in meaning.

But what does it mean to say there is an asymmetry in one sense and not in another? Language is limited in a certain way in that we cannot talk about my experience and your experience as the same thing. When it comes to experiences, says Wittgenstein, “it is said that only form, not content, can be communicated to *others*...so one talks to oneself *about the content*.”²⁷ Therefore we naturally concentrate on one’s own relationship to what cannot be expressed in language, in this case pain. In other words, because there is an asymmetry in the experience of pain between me and the other, we are immediately led to talk of one’s own pain as a starting point and we can only know of another’s experiences indirectly, as in the above positions discussed where inference and analogy are used. Avramides reiterates the worry we have been dealing with: “all I have to go on in the case of the other is behaviour, while in my own case I know that there is something more than behaviour – there is something *inside*.”²⁸ On the surface then, it seems that we have no way to express our own pain and the pain of another as the same thing. This, however, is an asymmetry in our language, in the description of the term, not in the meaning of the term. Wittgenstein attempts to solve this problem.

He argues that language has led us astray in insisting that the “asymmetry we observe in the use of our sensation words must mirror something about the nature of

²⁶ Avramides, p. 186

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 186

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 188

sensation.”²⁹ We must look instead at the way our words are used in the language-game, and this will enable us to move away from the metaphysical problems. Wittgenstein compares the language-game with a child learning a language. How the child comes to learn about pain, for example, is connected with the way we use pain in the language-game. Now, in learning a language, sensation words mean the same thing when used in connection with me as when used in connection with another. So, according to Wittgenstein, a proper description of our use of these words should leave us with no questions about the mind of another, or about whether an animal can feel pain.

But what is the proper description of our use of sensation words? Well, when we look at our language-game and use the word ‘pain’ we find that we “unselfconsciously and unproblematically use it in connection with others.”³⁰ For example, if we observe someone exhibiting pain-behaviour, we say that that person is in pain. This is the way a child learns the language-game. The child also, however, learns the complexity involved in this. For example, there are times when the behaviour might be lacking but the person is still in pain, or the behaviour is present but there isn’t any pain. Learning such complexity is part of understanding the language-game.

Sensation words are also used in connection with oneself, and understanding the difference between oneself and others is of utmost importance because of the asymmetry that exists. This asymmetry should be borne in mind, but it should not mean that there is anything problematic about explaining what is going on in one’s own case and what is going on in another’s case. Wittgenstein insists that the asymmetry is only problematic if one starts from one’s own mind, and then infers or hypothesises about another’s experience of a sensation. He instead starts by describing the way we use our words, and there is an acknowledgement here that our use of words involves an important asymmetry. However, the way we engage in the language-game allows us to understand that the asymmetry exists between oneself and the other in connection with the *use* of sensation words, such as pain. By looking at how we use these words, a description of the asymmetry at the same time provides us with an understanding of how the word pain, for example, has a univocal meaning. Given this then, it is hard to see how any problem can

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 188

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 191

arise about other minds. Indeed, Wittgenstein does not solve, but rather dissolves, the problem of other minds.

So, in our everyday language, we use the word pain if we see an animal exhibiting pain behaviour, for example the horse is in pain when it is being branded because it kicks the ground, tries to escape the source of the pain, neighs loudly and snorts. But, when I experience pain, when I burn myself on the stove for example, I have a different experience. I do not listen to my words and learn something about myself, the experience is more internal. This is the asymmetry that exists between myself and the other. But, although the asymmetry should be kept in mind, it does not mean that I cannot also know that the horse is in pain. By giving a proper description of our use of words, and acknowledging that there is an asymmetry in this use, we can still make sense of the horse being in pain, even though that experience of pain is different to mine. The asymmetry is only problematic if one begins by reflecting on one's own case. When we start there, all we are left with, at best, is inference or hypothesis. On Wittgenstein's account though it seems plausible to believe that animals can feel pain because our language game shows that, although there is an asymmetry in our description of pain, there is a univocity of meaning.³¹

Let us take stock thus far. I argued that one way we can know that animals feel pain is via the argument from analogy. This, however, was found to be implausible because the inference here is made from only own case, namely my own, and this is the weakest form of inductive argument. Along similar lines, I then argued that perhaps we can know that animals feel pain via inference to the best explanation. This approach overcomes the problems facing the argument from analogy. But inference to the best explanation can sometimes be just plain false, so I argued that, at best, it is only a useful way to determine if an animal is in pain, and, moreover, it is a good commonsense answer to the problem. Moving from knowing via inference to knowing via direct observation, I then considered behaviourism, which argues that there is nothing to our mental states over and above behaviour and dispositions to behave. Pain, on this model, is just pain-behaviour. However, I raised three problems that showed why this approach

³¹ It is irrelevant that non-human animals are not participants in the language game. The asymmetry exists in our general description of pain in the first and third-person. There needn't, therefore, be a dialogue between myself and the other.

is not a successful one. Functionalism, I then argued, though similar to behaviourism, could give us an account of how we can know that animals feel pain, while overcoming some of the problems that face behaviourism. Functionalism holds that mental states are to be defined by reference to causal antecedents and consequents, inputs and outputs. While functionalism gives a causal role back to pain, it still does not give us the same description of pain for first-person and third-person experiences. That is, although it gives a good description of third-person mental states, by doing so it ignores the inner, qualitative experience of pain in the first-person experience. Providing a Wittgensteinian argument that concentrates on language helps to overcome this problem. By concentrating on how we use language, and in particular our sensation words, Wittgenstein allows us to conclude that, although there is an asymmetry in use between first-person and third-person, there is still a univocity of meaning about these words. That is, it is plausible to believe that the pain of another is the same pain I experience. I have therefore shown that a number of approaches can be used to determine whether we can know about mental states other than our own, and although some of these approaches have difficulties, we can eventually conclude that it is plausible to believe that other minds exist and, more to the point, that animals can feel pain.

It is however possible that, even after considering the above arguments, one will still have a doubt as to whether animals can in fact feel pain.³² For, as I stated earlier, these arguments do not allow us to know for certain that animals can feel pain, or even that others have minds. They just show us that, at a minimum, it is plausible to believe these things. In a final argument, I am therefore going to employ a different tactic to combat this scepticism. I argue that we need to ask simply and bluntly: what is more rational, to doubt the existence of sentience in animals or to assume the existence of sentience in animals? So, in a Pascal's Wager-type move, the question shifts to not what we can know, but to what it is rational to believe in condition of uncertainty.

³² Louis-Jacques van Bogaert, for example, in his paper 'Sentience and Moral Standing' (*South African Journal of Philosophy*, 2004, 23(3)), raises worries about the meaning of the various terms used. He argues that we cannot give a credible argument for animals feeling pain unless we have a consensus about what terms such as 'pain', 'suffering', and especially 'sentience', actually mean.

2. Is it rational to believe that animals can suffer, even if we cannot know that they do?

Pascal's Wager is an argument that helps determine what is more rational to do or to believe, given that there is some level of uncertainty about an issue. It describes how one can choose to perform different actions by seeing what the different outcomes will be. Pascal himself was trying to decide the rational way to run his life in the face of uncertainty about the existence of God. The strategy, however, can be used more generally, and I will utilize it to determine whether it is more rational to believe an animal can feel pain or to doubt this.³³

Pascal's Wager can be set out as follows:

	God exists	There is no God
Believe that God exists	Infinite reward	Modest disutility
Do not believe that God exists	Infinite punishment	Modest benefit

As this table suggests, there are two possible actions, and two different ways the world might be. So, in this description of the original Wager, the two actions are in the left column: either believe that God exists or do not believe that God exists. The two different ways the world might be are in the top row: either God exists or there is no God. Therefore, there are four possible outcomes, where an outcome is composed of performing an action when the world is a particular way. Each outcome represents what the consequence will be if that action is performed, given the particular way the world is. The idea is that some outcomes will be more desirable than others, so we will be able to make a decision, even in condition of uncertainty, about what the best action would be.

³³ Two readings contributed to this discussion of Pascal's Wager: Radcliffe Richards, *J. Human Nature after Darwin: A Philosophical Introduction*. Routledge. 2000. pp. 34-5, and Sober, E. *Core Questions in Philosophy: A Text with Readings*. Prentice Hall. 2001. pp. 100-1

Therefore, even if we are uncertain about a particular state of affairs – a particular way the world might be – Pascal’s Wager shows that combining a particular action with that state of affairs leads to an outcome which, if it is the right action, should give the greatest payoff. Pascal’s solution therefore is: even if God’s existence is improbable, the payoff for believing is greater than the payoff for not believing. In other words, there is a huge benefit if you believe and God exists, whereas there is only a small cost if you believe and God does not exist.

Let us now apply Pascal’s Wager to the problem of uncertainty regarding whether or not animals can feel pain. As with the above example, we can set out the various possibilities in a table. Along one of the axes we can put two possibilities: either animals can feel pain or they cannot. These are the two ways the world might be, and this is the issue about which the sceptic is uncertain. Along the other axis we can put the two ways to approach the issue, i.e. what is more rational, to doubt their sentience or to assume their sentience? These are the two different actions we can take. We can now determine what the outcomes are for each of the possible combinations:

	Does Suffer	Does Not Suffer
Doubt	<u>Causing suffering to animals</u>	Irrelevant
Assume	<i>Preventing suffering to animals</i>	Irrelevant

The combination underlined is the worst possible state of affairs. It is analogous, if you will, to the infinite punishment outcome in the original Wager. The combination in italics, on the other hand, is the best possible state of affairs. It is analogous to the infinite reward outcome. From this it follows that the most rational thing to do would be to assume that animals can in fact feel pain, because this gives us the best possible outcome.

Let us use a concrete example: the case of a beagle being used for experimentation in a laboratory. If we doubt that this beagle can feel pain then there are two possibilities: A) it does not suffer and so is not sentient and the issue is irrelevant, i.e.

we can continue testing, or B) it can suffer and is sentient, and our practices of experimentation are therefore causing horrendous, and possibly unnecessary, pain and suffering. If, on the other hand, we assume that the beagle can feel pain, then, once again, there are two possibilities: A) it does not suffer and so is not sentient and the issue is, once again, irrelevant, or B) it can suffer and is sentient, and our assumption of this sentience therefore alleviates an untold amount of pain and suffering.

I have provided arguments that show that it is plausible to assume that animals can feel pain. However, because we cannot know for certain whether this is the case, I now argue that it is best to err on the side of caution. That is, because we acknowledge that cruelty and suffering are wrong, the benefits of preventing the suffering of animals outweigh the benefits that will be gained by continuing to cause animals pain. For example, the pleasure that the meat eater gains from eating a veal schnitzel, a benefit that can be described only in terms of taste, is outweighed by the suffering that calves endure 'down on the factory farm'. Erring on the side of caution prevents this suffering at the loss of a comparably meagre pleasure, while erring on the side of pleasure causes great suffering simply for the benefit of taste. Therefore, even if for some reason we cannot conclude that animals can feel pain and we remain sceptical about this, I have now also shown, using Pascal's Wager, that it is more rational to assume that they can feel pain than to doubt this.

One may be offended that I have even felt the need to defend the claim that animals feel pain. They might think that such a claim is obvious, that we should get on with debating more important issues, or indeed issues that might result from the truth of such a claim.³⁴ I am very sympathetic to such a response. However, by providing an argument for the truth of the claim, I have only strengthened the position, not undermined it. Someone wanting to object to the truth of the claim now has to firstly convince us that there is enough uncertainty about the issue, such that it should in fact be up for debate, secondly show that none of the arguments I have provided are good enough to give us the conclusion that animals feel pain, and finally that, even if this is the case, it is still more rational to doubt that they can feel pain than to assume it. The hill the objector has to

³⁴ For example, J. M. Coetzee's character Elizabeth Costello in *The Lives of Animals* (2000, Profile Books).

climb in defending the claim that animals cannot feel pain has therefore only been made steeper. I therefore conclude that it is rational to believe that animals can feel pain.

But what of this conclusion? Should there not be something following on from this? It is my aim now to assess what kind of significance this fact about animals has. In other words, what is the significance of saying that it is rational to believe that animals can feel pain, that they can in fact suffer when we treat them badly? In order to underline why we need to look at the significance, I will first give a brief description of the cruelty involved in factory farming. This is to show not only that animals can suffer, but that, everyday, in every part of the world, they do indeed suffer.

3. Animal Suffering: some facts

Factory farms are, as Engel describes, “intensive confinement facilities where animals are made to live in inhospitable unnatural conditions for the duration of their lives.”³⁵ Young are separated from their mothers at birth, and sometimes even before birth, and housed in overcrowded, diseased facilities:

“Broiler chickens and turkeys are warehoused in sheds containing anywhere from 10,000 to 100,000 birds; veal calves are kept in crates 22” by 54” and are chained at the neck, rendering them unable to move or turn around; pigs are confined in metal crates...situated on concrete slatted floors with no straw or bedding; and beef cattle are housed in feedlots containing up to 100,000 animals.”³⁶

These conditions cause injuries and disease for the animals, and they suppress all the animals’ instinctual urges, which itself causes them to behave uncharacteristically and aggressively. They receive all sorts of mutilations while being housed in these conditions, such as ‘debeaking’ for chickens and turkeys, branding, castration, dehorning and tail docking just to name a few, and, to cut costs, all of these excruciatingly painful procedures are done without anaesthesia. Because of these living conditions and practices, and because animals are given inadequate feed (which sometimes includes ground-up remains of other diseased animals), the immune systems of the animals crash

³⁵ Engel, JR. M. ‘The Immorality of Eating Meat’ in *The Moral Life*, Pojman, L. P. [Ed]. 2000. Oxford University Press. p. 861

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 861-2

and they invariably fall ill. To ensure they are not lost and make it to slaughter alive, they are fed a steady diet of antibiotics and growth hormones. This life of suffering culminates in being inhumanely loaded onto trucks and sent to slaughterhouses without food, water or protection from injury.

These rearing techniques are common practice:

“97 per cent of all poultry are produced in 100,000-plus bird operations, 97 per cent of pigs are raised in confinement systems,...all veal calves are crate-raised by definition [because exercise would produce muscles and this would spoil the tenderness of the meat], and 61 per cent of beef cattle are confined in factory farm feedlots.”³⁷

No other human activity, says Engel, “results in more pain, suffering, frustration, and death than factory farming and animal agribusiness.”³⁸ There are many other documentations of the practices that go on in factory farming, and most of them a lot more explicit and horrific than this one.³⁹ I have included it to show that animals the world over are suffering to an unimaginable degree, and that it is therefore worth analysing the significance of this fact that animals can feel pain.

4. Does it matter to us that animals suffer?

It is not enough to just conclude that it is rational to believe that animals can feel pain. One can, presumably, believe a number of things rationally, but these things need not be significant in any way. For instance, I might rationally believe that it will rain later this afternoon. This claim, although rational, and probably true, might not matter to me though; it has no significance. Therefore, we must also, given that we have established that animals feel pain, question why this fact should matter to us. Why is the fact of animal suffering significant?

In *The Examined Life*, Robert Nozick analyses four modes of evaluation: value, meaning, importance and weight.⁴⁰ Something can have significance in any, or some, or

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 866

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 867

³⁹ See for example Singer's *Animal Liberation*, or Singer and Jim Mason's *Animal Factories* (1990, New York: Harmony Books).

⁴⁰ Nozick, R. *The Examined Life*. 1989. Touchstone.

all of these ways. I will therefore assess the significance of the fact of animals' suffering according to these modes of evaluation.

Firstly then, according to Nozick, something is intrinsically valuable if it has "organic unity".⁴¹ That is, the greater the diversity that gets unified, and the tighter the unity to which the diversity is brought, the greater a thing's organic unity is. For example, a whole ecological system has organic unity because there is a great diversity of things that get unified (the different players in an ecosystem), and the unity to which the diversity is brought is very tight, i.e. dense and interrelated (because each one of the players relies on a number of the others). A whole ecological system is therefore intrinsically valuable.

Where value involves something being integrated within its own boundaries (like the ecosystem), meaning involves having "some connection beyond these boundaries."⁴² One gets meaning when one transcends the limits of something. For example, one transcends the limits of one's life by leaving some sort of legacy behind, like a child or some sort of considerable project. Meaning on its own, however, always involves a regress. Each time one tries to create meaning by transcending one's limits, one notices further limits. About any given thing we can stand back and ask what its meaning is and, having found that, we then "seem driven to find a link with yet another thing beyond its boundaries...and so a regress is launched."⁴³ We can only stop looking for meaning then when we once again find value, as value is about the internal unity of a thing. Value does not look to find a connection beyond boundaries. When we look beyond a thing to find its meaning, what we find to stop the regress is a connection with value.

Importance. Some things may have value without being important, for example a game of chess, for the most part, is not important but it may have value. On the other hand, some activities may be important, but they will have neither value nor meaning. For example, the conducting of a census is important, but it is not necessarily valuable. If we want to get something done, then we might settle for something to be important without it being valuable or meaningful. But the best sort of importance, the kind that makes the most impact, says Nozick, also has value and meaning. An important action

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 164

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 166

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 167

must have some effect. Impact is not measured by the number of effects though, e.g. the atoms displaced when I cough. Rather, impact should be measured by the kind of effects. And when we specify the kinds of effects, we once again “invoke the notions of value or meaning”.⁴⁴ So an important event or action is one in which the effects matter, and a difference is made to value and meaning.

Finally, the weight of something, says Nozick, “is its internal substantiality and strength.”⁴⁵ Although this strength is inherent, something has weight if it also maintains and re-establishes itself in the face of external forces. Furthermore, weight also depends on “how tightly something is integrated in a network of relations.”⁴⁶ A weighty opinion, for example, is one that has been duly considered, has taken other factors into account, becomes integrated with other opinions etc.

To sum up the four evaluative modes then, importance involves external or relational strength. Weight involves internal, inherent strength. Value is an inherent integration of something. Meaning is an integration with external things. Nozick provides the following table:⁴⁷

	Inherent	Relational
Integration	Value	Meaning
Strength	Weight	Importance

How then, is the fact that animals can feel pain significant? Does it have value, meaning, importance or weight, or some, or all of these?⁴⁸

I argue that the fact of animals being able to suffer should matter to us because of the content of this fact, namely the nature of pain itself. In *The View from Nowhere*, Thomas Nagel discusses whether pain has merely an agent-relative value or whether it is

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 172

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 178

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 178-9

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 179

⁴⁸ It should be noted that it would be significant if it had just one of these modes of evaluation.

valuable for neutral reasons too (being pain, perhaps it is better to refer to its disvalue).⁴⁹ He argues that pain can be detached in thought from the fact that it is my pain without losing any of its dreadfulness. So being in pain is not only a bad thing when it is a subjective experience, but instead, as he says, pain “has, so to speak, a life of itself. That is why it is natural to ascribe to it a value of its own.”⁵⁰ While pain does provide agent-relative reasons for action, the first and most natural generalisation of the value of pain is an agent-neutral one.⁵¹

A fact about pain therefore should matter to us simply because it is a fact about pain, regardless of who or what is experiencing the pain. But, we can take it a step further by using Nozick’s analysis of significance. When we apply the fact of animals feeling pain to this discussion of significance, the fact that animals suffer is, I argue, one that is valuable. In other words, its significance is inherent specifically because it deals with the issue of pain.

Something is intrinsically valuable if, as Nozick says, it has organic unity. By describing pain as having a life of itself, a value of its own, and being agent-neutral, we are, I argue, describing pain as having organic unity. Being agent-neutral, pain just is pain, and is not merely pain-for-*x*. Therefore, a fact about pain should be a significant one because pain, it has been established, has a value (or disvalue) of its own.

Determining that the fact that animals feel pain is valuable is surely enough to enable us to conclude then that such a fact about the world is indeed significant. In other words, it *should* matter to us that animals feel pain. Whether it also has meaning, importance or weight is somewhat irrelevant, as according to Nozick, something can be significant by fulfilling just one of these modes of evaluation. It will suffice therefore to conclude that the fact that animals can feel pain is indeed a significant fact about the world.

Concluding earlier that animals can feel pain was therefore just a first step. I have now also taken into account the significance of this fact. I argue therefore that, given its significance, we can now ask what should be done, what strategy should be taken, to prevent or at least reduce, the suffering of animals where and when it happens.

⁴⁹ Nagel, T. *The View from Nowhere*. 1986. Oxford University Press.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 160

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 162

Chapter 2

Assessing demi-vegetarianism as a possible strategy for preventing animal suffering

In the previous chapter, I argued that it is rational to believe that animals can feel pain. Furthermore, I argued that they suffer greatly in factory farm conditions, and the fact of their suffering is a significant one. I now discuss what the best strategy for preventing their suffering and promoting their happiness would be.

There are two possible strategies one can endorse in order to help prevent the suffering of animals that are raised for food. This chapter will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the first of these strategies, namely demi-vegetarianism. I will firstly explain demi-vegetarianism and show how it can support animal liberation. I will then point out two initial problems with this strategy. Furthermore, I will argue that demi-vegetarianism fails for a more fundamental reason: it does not succeed in justifying the killing of animals for food. Finally, I will briefly assess the plausibility of another possible strategy: mass killing. This purports to eliminate animal suffering by killing all the animals. This strategy, I will argue, is also flawed, and self-defeating.

1. Demi-vegetarianism:

The first strategy then is demi-vegetarianism. As the term is not all that well known, it is necessary that I firstly explain what it means. A vegetarian does not eat any meat whatsoever. A vegetarian does, however, eat eggs and dairy products. Someone who boycotts these products, and in fact all animal products, is called a vegan. A demi-vegetarian is someone who eats eggs and dairy, and *some* meat products. A demi-vegetarian is by no means a meat-eater though because firstly she eats very little meat, and secondly she is careful to choose specifically what meat to eat and what not to eat. The majority of demi-vegetarians choose not to eat some meat products for dietetic reasons, but demi-vegetarianism can also be an ethical choice.

But how can demi-vegetarianism be an ethical choice if one is still eating meat? Demi-vegetarianism makes a distinction between two types of wrongness involved in the

debate. Firstly, there are the arguments concerning the alleged wrongness of killing animals for food, regardless of whether this involves suffering or not. And secondly, there are the arguments concerning the wrongness of causing suffering to animals while raising them for food, whether or not one kills them. Demi-vegetarianism, for the most part, concentrates on this second wrongness, and by doing so it aims to prevent animal suffering. It is, however, forced to admit that there is no wrongness involved in killing animals for food. I will return to this point later.

Assuming, for now, that there is nothing wrong with killing animals for food, how can demi-vegetarianism help to prevent the suffering of animals raised for food? Demi-vegetarianism aims to make the life that a farm animal lives a happy one, or at least a cruelty-free one. According to demi-vegetarianism, there is no wrongness involved in eating meat if that meat comes from an animal that was reared without suffering, an animal that lived a happy life. In order to help explain this, it may be useful to introduce R. M. Hare's concept of a Quality-Adjusted Life Year (QALY).⁵² This involves judgements about a being's quality of life. Although these are hard to make and certainly not easy to quantify, the concept is nevertheless a useful one. What demi-vegetarianism aims to accomplish is the maximising of the amount of QALY's a sentient animal has, making its existence a happy one, and this is regardless of whether the animal is killed for food or not. So demi-vegetarianism aims to change the practices involved in rearing animals for food. In other words, it aims to prevent animal suffering by eliminating factory-farm conditions.

As an example of the type of farming Hare has in mind, he talks of two devoted organic farmers in England who treat their animals very well. The animals on the farm lead pleasant lives it would seem, with room to move freely and opportunity to exist naturally. Although they do not slaughter their animals themselves, they "have made what they think are satisfactory arrangements with the local public abattoir, and always accompany their animals there to see that they suffer the minimum of fear."⁵³ If all farms

⁵² Hare, R. M. 'Why I am only a Demi-vegetarian' in *Singer and his Critics*, Jamieson, D. [Ed]. 1999. Blackwell Publishers. p. 238

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 241

were as well looked after as theirs then, says Hare, “there would be no complaints about cruelty involved in animal husbandry.”⁵⁴

Demi-vegetarianism will have a great impact on reducing the suffering of animals by providing an alternative for people with regards to eating meat. A foreseeable consequence of everyone giving up meat eating – being vegetarian – would be a drastic reduction in the market for meat. But this will most likely force out the smaller producers first, like Hare’s organic farmers, and the irony is that the smaller producers will in fact be the ones who treat their animals the best. What we will be left with is the big commercial meat producers – factory farms – monopolizing the meat market. This is obviously undesirable as such a scenario does not contribute to preventing the suffering of the animals in question. All that it does is eliminate any market opposition to the factory farms. Demi-vegetarianism, however, purports to have a crucial advantage when it comes to influencing the market. Demi-vegetarians can carefully select the meat, eggs and dairy that they buy and this, if the decision was made for ethical reasons, would be produce that does not come from factory farms. As an added advantage, demi-vegetarians could also convince meat-eaters to do the same. Therefore, the meat trade, it seems would have a lot to fear from demi-vegetarianism.

But how would we know what meat was produced from where? Hare proposes an idea that seems to provide an answer: making it legislation where “full disclosure of the sources of all foodstuffs” is required on the packaging.⁵⁵ For example, on a box of eggs it could read ‘free-range no-harm eggs produced by the happy chickens of Liberty Farm’ or some such thing. The catch is that, by law, on a box of factory-farmed eggs there would have to be a similar sign saying that they are in fact factory farmed. One can then infer that the chickens that laid them exist with all the horrors that come with that sort of farming. Meat and dairy products would say the same sort of thing. This would then allow demi-vegetarians, and other meat-eaters, to make informed decisions about what they are buying and where it comes from. Two added benefits of this is that firstly it takes into account the interests of those who still wish to eat meat, and secondly, the produce

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 241

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 242

bought from non-factory farms is apparently of superior quality to the commercial produce and is probably healthier.

On the surface, demi-vegetarianism seems to be a good strategy to endorse to help minimise the suffering of animals. It concentrates on the conditions that animals are forced to live in, and on changing these conditions to prevent the suffering and promote the happiness of animals. However, there are two initial problems with this strategy.

2. Two initial problems for demi-vegetarianism

i) Suffering may not be significantly reduced:

Firstly, if one endorses demi-vegetarianism, it is not clear, and indeed it may never be the case, that the suffering animals endure will be significantly minimised. While demi-vegetarianism does aim to prevent suffering through changing farming practices, it is not clear that all practices that cause suffering will actually cease. And, more importantly, it may never be plausible to expect that conditions like those described by Hare on the organic farm can ever be universalised.

Animals do not only suffer in factory farm conditions. There is an element of suffering in what Singer calls “routine events [such] as the separation of mother and young, castration, transport, slaughter and many other aspects of their lives.”⁵⁶ While Hare’s organic farmers monitored the pain involved in slaughtering, it does seem that the practices described above will still occur if demi-vegetarianism is the strategy adopted. And given that we are trying to prevent suffering, such a strategy may be somewhat unproductive.

Furthermore, when we endorse these practices – and especially the killing of animals – it makes us think of animals as mere objects or means to our ends. As long as we continue to think of animals in this way, says Singer, “we will not succeed in changing the attitudes that lead to so much mistreatment of animals.”⁵⁷ The demi-vegetarian could, however, respond that their strategy does not necessarily hold the view of animals as objects. If one is taking the time to check where the produce comes from,

⁵⁶ Singer, P. ‘A Response’ in *Singer and his Critics*, Dale Jamieson [Ed]. 1999. Blackwell Publishers. p. 323

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 327

and one is doing so with the specific intention of helping to alleviate the suffering of animals on factory farms, then one is actually considering the interests of the animals, and not viewing them purely as objects.

But a further related point can be made. As a way to inform the public about what meat they are buying, it was suggested that there be legislation requiring full disclosure of the sources of all foodstuffs. The legislation, however, would have to be very specific about what it describes as an 'ethical choice'. For instance, Singer claims that in the U.K. a similar scheme was adopted, even endorsed by the RSPCA, yet under the banner of 'Freedom Foods' it still allowed cruel practices such as cutting back the beaks of chickens.⁵⁸ This alerts us to the fact that just because something is called free-range or organic does not mean that all suffering has been eliminated. Such terms can be misleading. Indeed, in most cases, free-range just means that the crates that chickens are forced to live in are made slightly bigger so that they have more room to move. This is, however, a far cry from what one might imagine free-range to mean. As Mylan Engel says, "the only way to be sure that what you are eating was humanely raised and painlessly killed is to raise it and kill it yourself."⁵⁹

Therefore, demi-vegetarianism provides us with a misleading ambiguity when it comes to preventing suffering, for, although this is its aim, it still allows for practices that would indeed cause suffering. It seems then that there is something about demi-vegetarianism that does not fully embrace what we mean when we campaign for the prevention of suffering of farm animals. It lacks that element of taking a stand against meat eating, and instead complicates the issue by trying to determine what produce is acceptable and what is not.

ii) The economic reasons may backfire:

Secondly, the economic reasons that demi-vegetarians think would work in favour of their strategy might in fact backfire. In terms of impact on sales, Hare believes that demi-vegetarianism is a threat to the meat industry because people can select the meat that they

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 325

⁵⁹ Engel, M. 'The Immorality of Eating Meat' in *The Moral Life*, Pojman, L. P. 2000. Oxford University Press. p. 881

buy, and this will exclude factory farm products. In a way, Hare is right. The total volume of meat sold has dropped much more because of people cutting down on the amount of meat that they buy rather than people giving up meat altogether. But there are three problems with this.

Firstly, most people have selected some meat over other meat for dietetic, and not ethical, reasons. It is acknowledged by most that cutting down on meat products lowers one's risk of heart disease, cancer and other diseases and contributes to a healthier, longer life. But, because most people have adopted demi-vegetarianism without the ethical concerns, what they have cut down on mostly is red meat. That is, those who are demi-vegetarian for dietetic reasons have dropped beef and other red meat from their diet, while at the same time retaining leaner meats such as chicken, turkey and even pork. The farming of these animals, however, still contributes to an overwhelming amount of suffering, so demi-vegetarianism devoid of any ethical content is therefore not an effective strategy for preventing animal suffering.

Even if demi-vegetarianism does have ethical content, as Hare's form does, there is still a second economic worry. Because it is not produced in the same mass commercial way as factory farmed products are, it is probable that organic meat will be more expensive than the normal fare on offer.⁶⁰ This is certainly the case with free-range eggs. Hence, making an ethical choice about what type of meat to buy might not be the only factor at play in this process. Only those who can afford to spend even a little more money on organic products will do so, while the majority of people will maintain their current, thrifty practices when it comes to meat consumption, not because they want to or choose to, but because they have to. This is especially true of developing countries like South Africa. In richer, developed countries there may be enough consumption of organic products to make a difference to the market, and thereby change farming practices. But in the majority of communities around the world, the contribution that will be made by people buying organic meat over factory-farmed meat will be insignificant. And this is not because they do not accept the significance of the claim that animals that are raised

⁶⁰ After all, factory farms make meat more affordable for many consumers by reducing to a minimum the price of raising animals. As Singer notes in quoting Ruth Harrison: "Cruelty is acknowledged only where profitability ceases" (in *Singer and his Critics*, p. 322).

for food suffer immensely and unnecessarily. Rather, the reason is purely economic: they just cannot afford to spend that little extra to buy ethically produced meat.

The same is true of other products. For example, some cosmetic products, such as those produced by The Body Shop, do not involve testing on animals. They are, however, more expensive than the majority of cosmetic products that are produced by other companies that do test their products on animals. Once again, most people probably acknowledge that testing cosmetic products on animals can cause the animals to suffer and is completely unnecessary, yet for economic reasons they will still purchase the cheaper, commercial products over the more expensive, but cruelty-free products. One of demi-vegetarianism's major advantages therefore might in fact backfire. That is, because of a difference in price, most people, in all probability, will continue to purchase meat that is produced by factory farms instead of the ethically-produced organic meat that demi-vegetarianism advocates.

Finally, demi-vegetarianism projects the following scenario: if everyone gave up eating meat there would be a drastic reduction in the market for meat, and this will most likely force out the smaller, organic producers first. This, so the reasoning goes, would leave us with the big commercial meat producers monopolizing the meat market. Therefore, it is advantageous that people carry on eating some meat. However, there is another possible scenario where the economics would, once again, backfire.

In the first two economic worries just discussed it was assumed that those who would practice demi-vegetarianism would simply choose some meat over other meat. However, the definition of demi-vegetarianism claims that demi-vegetarians not only choose what meat to eat and what not to eat, but also eat *less* meat. If this is the case then, as with the scenario that demi-vegetarianism projected, the market for meat will get smaller. With the market for meat getting smaller, the cheaper produce, that which comes from factory farms, might start becoming the more attractive option, even for those who acknowledge the wrongness involved. It is possible therefore that demi-vegetarianism will once again backfire in that people will start to choose the cheaper, factory-farmed produce over the demi-vegetarian alternative. This is especially relevant when we consider the practices in less affluent communities. If one lives in a country where the

majority of people are poverty-stricken, then, as argued earlier, the cheaper produce will definitely fare better.

Although demi-vegetarianism projects that choosing less meat, as well as a specific kind of meat, will change the meat market and thereby force the big producers to change their practices, I have provided three equally plausible scenarios that have shown that this might not actually be the case. Granted, these projections are not based on any economic models of the meat industry and have no empirical data to back them up. But, then again, neither does the demi-vegetarian argument. The three alternative scenarios that I have sketched are just as, if not more, plausible than the scenario that demi-vegetarianism predicts. The onus, I argue, is on the proponent of demi-vegetarianism to show that his economic arguments will not backfire, as I have predicted they might.

These two problems may, on their own, be enough to show demi-vegetarianism as an implausible strategy. However, there is another, more fundamental, problem with demi-vegetarianism. As noted earlier, demi-vegetarianism concentrates on the wrongness of causing suffering to animals while raising them for food. In doing so, demi-vegetarians are forced to admit that there is no wrongness involved in painlessly killing animals for food. Demi-vegetarianism, however, ought to provide a defence of this claim. That is, there should be a good argument to show why there is nothing wrong with killing animals for food. I will now give such an argument, and show why the issue can be a problematic one. As of yet, I have said very little about the wrongness of killing animals for food. This next section therefore doubles as a discussion of whether or not in fact it is wrong to kill animals for food, an issue that is vitally important within the debate on how we ought to treat animals.

3. Is killing animals for food justified?

How might a demi-vegetarian go about defending an argument that claims there is nothing wrong with killing animals for food? Let me first explain how Hare defends this claim, since it is his version of demi-vegetarianism that I am analysing. Hare argues that if the animals are happy (i.e. if they do not suffer) while they're alive, then killing them is not wrong. A major premise in his reasoning is that to exist is better than to not exist.

That is, if an animal exists, and does not suffer while it exists, then that existence is better than no existence at all. Being humanely raised and painlessly killed for human consumption makes for an overall better life for an animal than simply not existing. Moreover, this way of life, says Hare, is a better one for an animal than if that animal were to live and die a natural death, which would include a lot more suffering. Therefore, our current practices of eating animals, as long as the animals do not suffer while they are alive, benefits them.

There is, however, an immediate problem. If existence is a benefit, it is not clear that non-existence is necessarily going to be a harm. For it to be a harm, existence must be preferable, but in order for it to be preferable we must have something to compare it with. We cannot, however, compare a state of non-existence to a state of existence because with non-existence there is just nothing; we cannot imagine it or say what it would be like. Hare's response is, "happy people existing are certainly glad that they exist, and so are presumably comparing their existence with a possible non-existence."⁶¹ But I do not think this is the case, even if such a comparison is possible.

Consider the following analogy:⁶² a paedophilic society intentionally brings children into the world with the specific purpose of sexually exploiting them. But they make sure that these children live comfortable, pleasant lives. As soon as they lose their sexual appeal the children are then killed painlessly. The exploitation and killing of these children is justified through the benefit of being born, of coming into existence. Surely we would deem such a practice immoral. Yet, it is similar to Hare's argument for bringing animals into existence. A society of meat eaters brings animals into existence with the specific purpose of eating them. While they are alive these animals live happy lives, but as soon as they reach a desirable size or weight, they are slaughtered. And the justification for this is that it is better for the animal to have lived this existence than not to have lived at all.

It seems that the only way a proponent of this argument can get out of this problem is to say that there is a disanalogy between human and non-human animals. That is, human life is more valuable than animal life and we would never do such a thing to

⁶¹ Hare, p. 239

⁶² Zamir, T. 'Killing for Pleasure'

<http://cla.calpoly.edu/~jlynch/Killing%20for%20Pleasure-Tzachi%20Zamir.htm> p. 13

children because of this. Hare does seem to endorse such a view as his argument is in keeping with the replaceability argument. This states that the loss we cause to one animal when we kill it can be made up by bringing another equally happy animal into existence. For him, most animals, including farm animals, are replaceable. That is, they do not possess the capacities that only persons do to render them irreplaceable. These capacities are things like self-consciousness, rationality, an inward perspective of existence, an ability to appreciate the past and the future etc. Therefore it is not a bad thing in itself to painlessly kill a replaceable animal.

While I argue that it is doubtful that young children possess these capacities to a greater degree than animals, Hare is correct in framing the debate around what capacities beings possess. This, it seems, is the best way to approach the issue, but Hare's argument needs to be supplemented. I will now offer a potential account of why killing animals is not intrinsically wrong, discussing both direct and indirect reasons that make killing wrong. My aim is to show that these reasons are based on what capacities a being possesses and, since there are only indirect reasons against killing animals, it is not intrinsically wrong to do so.

It is necessary that I first explain why only direct reasons, and not indirect reasons, involve an intrinsic wrongness. Direct reasons are those that refer to the specific individual. Indirect reasons refer to some consequence external to the individual. To use Jonathan Glover's terminology, indirect reasons are "side-effects".⁶³ So the wrongness involved in killing a being can either be a direct wrongness, which involves a harm done to the individual, or an indirect wrongness, which involves a harm done to someone or something outside of the individual, e.g. to the family. Therefore, something is intrinsically wrong only if it is direct, that is only if it involves a harm done to the individual, and this is regardless of whether there are side-effects involved. It is my aim to show that the killing of an animal does not involve a harm done to the individual, and so is not intrinsically wrong.

We need then to start by defining what it is *about* a being that makes killing that being intrinsically wrong. John Locke presents us with the capacities that he believes defines a person: "a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can

⁶³ Glover, J. *Causing Death and Saving Lives*. 1977. Penguin Books. p. 40

consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places.”⁶⁴ This definition implies that a person possesses capacities for rationality (thinking, reason, reflection), self-awareness (can consider itself as itself) and a conception of the future and past (in different times and places). Rationality it seems is necessary for self-awareness; a being cannot consider itself as itself if it cannot reason or reflect. Self-awareness, in turn, is necessary for conceiving of different times and places; a being needs to be aware of itself being in those different times and places. While rationality is at its core, the capacity for self-awareness seems to be the important one in determining whether killing a being with such a capacity is wrong.

If a being is self-aware, it considers itself as itself and can conceive of itself at some future time. The reason why this capacity is so important is because killing brings about a loss for beings with this capacity, whereas this is irrelevant for beings that are not self-aware. If a being does not possess the capacity to conceive itself as existing over time, then, says Singer, “we need not take into account the possibility of it worrying about the prospect of its future existence being cut short. It can’t worry about this, for it has no conception of its own future.”⁶⁵ So if a being can conceive of itself existing over time, then killing that being would be wrong. This applies to a greater significance with beings that are highly future-oriented. Therefore, this reason is especially applicable to persons; it is in my interests to be alive because I have the concept of a continuing self. Any being without this concept will not comprehend the benefits of not being killed.

What beings fall into this category then? Do animals possess this capacity for self-awareness that would make killing them wrong? It can be argued that they do not. James Rachels provides a description of this capacity that illustrates adequately, I think, why animals do not possess it. He makes the distinction between a life that is “biographical” and a life that is “biological”.⁶⁶ Persons live biographical lives; they are like characters in a narrative. They plan for the fulfilment of preferences far into the future and they can conceive of themselves enjoying the fruits of this preparation. On the other hand, for beings in the latter category, preferences will be of an immediate sort, existence is spurred on by impulse and momentary wants and desires, and there is no

⁶⁴ Singer, P. *Practical Ethics* [2nd Ed]. 1993. Cambridge University Press. p. 87

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 91-2

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 126

reflection on a time or a place other than the one currently experienced. Farm animals, according to this, live biological lives. They do not possess a capacity for self-awareness, and so killing them is not intrinsically wrong.

This argument does, at first, seem plausible. The capacity for self-awareness gives us a direct reason not to kill a being, and therefore makes such a killing intrinsically wrong. But, I contend that this argument oversimplifies the issue, and I will now explain what I meant when I said this issue is problematic. Jeff McMahan also concentrates on this capacity of self-awareness in his discussion of killing, but his formulation throws ‘a spanner in the works’. He argues that what we care about when we say that killing is wrong is a being’s “time-relative interests”.⁶⁷ These are determined by the link between the “prudential unity relations” of the person while she is alive and what she would be missing out on were she to be killed.⁶⁸ A being needs to be self-aware in order to have time-relative interests and prudential unity relations. These prudential unity relations insist that there be a “sufficient physical, functional, and organisational continuity of the brain to support a degree of psychological unity over time”,⁶⁹ and the stronger this unity is the greater the loss to the individual if she is killed. Thus McMahan develops the Time-Relative Interest Account (TRIA) of the wrongness of killing:

“...this alternative account would explain what is wrong about killing in terms of the effect on the victim...it would insist that it is the prudential unity relations, which hold to varying degrees, that matter. Therefore it will explain the wrongness of killing in terms of the effect on the victim’s time-relative interests...what is fundamentally wrong about killing is that it frustrates the victim’s time-relative interest in continuing to live.”⁷⁰

This Time-Relative Interest Account of the wrongness of killing implies that the killing of an animal is “normally substantially less seriously wrong than the killing of a person and that the killing of a lower animal is normally less objectionable than the

⁶⁷ McMahan, J. *The Ethics of Killing*. 2002. Oxford University Press. *Oxford Scholarship Online*. <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public.content/philosophy/0195079981/toc.html> p. 192

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 193

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 193

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 194

killing of a higher animal.”⁷¹ While TRIA acknowledges that the amount of good an animal loses by dying is typically much less than the good a person loses, and that the strength of the prudential unity relations are typically weaker in the case of an animal, it does not suggest that the killing of an animal, based on this lack, is justified.

It is important to explain in what way an animal has weaker time-relative interests than a person does. Animals that are less self-aware have limited cognitive and emotional capacities, and they therefore lack the capacity for many forms of experience that make a person’s life so rich and fulfilling. Animals are incapable of forming *deep* social relations based on mutual understanding.⁷² Moreover, they lack “both imagination and an aesthetic sense and hence are unable to experience works of art, literature or music or to appreciate the aesthetic dimensions of the natural world; they are incapable of engaging in complex and skilled activities or achieving difficult goals or ambitions.”⁷³ All of these, I argue, are manifestations of a high degree of self-awareness. So the goods characteristic of an animal’s life are much less compared to the goods characteristic of the lives of persons.

TRIA also recognises that the strength of the prudential unity relations that would have bound an individual to itself in the future are substantially weaker in the case of animals. That is, a person has a stronger psychological unity over time, which makes the loss were she to be killed that much greater. The possible future experiences of a person matter more because the prudential unity relations that bind the person to herself in the future are so strong. Consider this point with regard to preparation for the future. Killing a person may retroactively affect the meaning and value of that person’s life. Being self-aware, and therefore having a conception of themselves at a future time, persons have long-range desires and they invest time and resources in preparing for the future. The eventual fulfilment of these desires may bestow value on the effort that it took to ensure their fulfilment. For example, I try to do as well as I can at school so that I get good results and am able to go to university. Then at university I try to do as well as possible so that I am employable once I have finished university. I am putting in effort now to ensure that future desires come to fruition. Therefore, when death prevents the fulfilment

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 194

⁷² The emphasis is on deep because many animals are certainly capable of forming simple relationships with other animals or persons.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 195

of projects I have put effort into, it not only robs me of a future good in my life (the rewards of that project), but also strips my efforts in the past from having any meaning. There is an extra loss incurred.

However, the specific wrongness involved in killing here is less applicable in the case of animals. Animals lack long-range desires and do not therefore consciously plan for the future. Death, therefore, does not rob these animals of a good in the future (because they cannot conceive of themselves in the future), nor does it rob their previous activities of meaning, for this meaning is contingent on future fulfilment. Therefore, the amount of good an animal loses through being killed is typically much less than that which a person loses, and the prudential unity relations that would bind the animal to itself in the future would be comparatively weak. Because of this TRIA implies, and this is McMahan's main claim, that the killing of an animal is normally substantially less seriously wrong than the killing of a person. This, however, is a very different conclusion from the one reached in the previous argument, even though both accounts concentrate on self-awareness as an integral capacity. McMahan seems to be suggesting that killing an animal is less wrong than killing a person, because this capacity for self-awareness is so strong in a person, but not that it is not wrong.

I therefore contend that the argument that concludes that killing an animal is not intrinsically wrong is based on a mistaken assumption, namely that the animals in question do not possess self-awareness to any significant degree. Such a capacity may indeed be sufficient for making killing intrinsically wrong, but it is mistaken to assume that animals do not also possess this capacity at all. There are three important points to make about this.

Firstly, McMahan's argument suggests that the issue of whether or not animals are self-aware is not one that is clear-cut. If an animal is conscious and sufficiently physically similar to us, then we cannot know for certain that it lacks self-awareness. We can know that persons are self-aware and, in all probability, that the great apes are too. Also, we can safely assume that molluscs, and anything lower in the animal kingdom, do not possess self-awareness. But how can we know for sure with regards to the animals that we torture, slaughter and consume every day? I argue that we cannot. It is an

empirical point as to what animal possesses what capacity, and, as far as we know, the debate still continues with regards to this issue.⁷⁴

This brings us to the second point. McMahan's argument shows that the issue is not an either/or one (either you are self-aware or you are not). He argues that it is less wrong to kill an animal than it is to kill a person because animals have less good to lose and have weaker prudential unity relations, i.e. they are less self-aware. What this points to then is that a capacity like self-awareness should be on a continuum. At the one end we find normal adult persons, who are the most self-aware. What is at the other end, however, is up for debate, but perhaps lower order mammals and birds, or even fish. If we define killing as being wrong based on this capacity, then we need a continuum of wrongness that mirrors this continuum of self-awareness. Once again then, at the one end the greatest wrongness is committed when a person is killed. And at the other end, killing is much less wrong. What lies in the middle, or maybe even closer to the less wrong scale of the continuum, I argue, are the animals that we kill for food. Therefore, regardless of where they are positioned on the continuum, it is less wrong to kill them than it is to kill persons, but that does not mean that it is not wrong.

This issue of justification brings us to the third point. Because it is only less wrong to kill animals than it is to kill persons, I argue that one ought to therefore provide good justification for killing an animal. TRIA asserts that it is generally objectionable to kill an animal because doing so would frustrate the animal's time-relative interest in continuing to live, even though the animal might have substantially weaker time-relative interests than a person does. McMahan therefore writes, "if one is going to be justified in killing an animal, one must, *at a minimum*, have a purpose that is sufficiently serious to outweigh the animal's time-relative interest in continuing to live."⁷⁵ The social practice of slaughtering animals for food, I argue, cannot meet this burden of justification. I acknowledge that there will be times when a person's need for food might be so great that it outweighs an animal's time-relative interest. Also, I accept that some people may need to eat meat on a regular basis because their bodies do not function properly without it.

⁷⁴ Authors such as Stephen Wise show this to be the case. His latest book, *Drawing the Line* (2002, Perseus Books), looks at the high levels of consciousness and intelligence of a number of animals, including apes, dolphins, dogs, and even parrots. Such an inquiry does indeed throw doubt on where we draw the line when it comes to what animals possess self-awareness.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 203

But these two qualifications do not justify our current practices of slaughtering billions of animals every year.⁷⁶ For most of us meat is a completely unnecessary, and in fact unhealthy, addition to our diets and the only reason that can be given to justify our continued consumption of it is gustatory pleasure. This is hardly a justification that is going to hold any weight in comparison with an animal's time-relative interest in continuing to live.

Therefore, with the help of McMahan's Time-Relative Interest Account, I argue that we cannot conclude that there is nothing wrong with killing animals for food. I presented an argument that demi-vegetarianism would need to provide in order to claim that there is nothing wrong with killing animals for food. That argument claimed that the capacity for self-awareness is sufficient for making the killing of a being intrinsically wrong. This conclusion seems right. However, where that argument erred was in not assigning that capacity, even to a small degree, to the animals that we raise for food. No distinction was made between animals that could have self-awareness, that are capable of forming desires for the future, and those that are not. Hare's own argument mentioned earlier is guilty of the same error. McMahan's argument shows that if we see self-awareness as consisting of time-relative interests, then some animals do have this integral capacity, and, although it is less wrong to kill animals than it is to kill persons, killing animals without good justification – important medical experiments, for example⁷⁷ – is in fact wrong.

How plausible is it, however, to believe that animals can have interests, even to a small degree? McMahan argues that animals have a weak time-relative interest in continuing to live, but what evidence is there that this is the case? If the good an animal loses by being killed is typically much less than a person would lose, and if an animal's prudential unity relations are significantly weaker than a person's, then we can ask whether animals have these capacities at all.

⁷⁶ In the United States alone 8.35 billion animals were slaughtered for food in 1997 (excluding horses, goats, rabbits and fish), and this is not counting almost a billion more who died before even reaching the slaughterhouse. (Engel, 2000. p. 867)

⁷⁷ I say 'important' medical experiments because some are just arbitrary where the animals endure much suffering and are killed for no good reason.

Jordan Curnutt provides a good argument for why it is plausible to believe that animals have interests.⁷⁸ As part of a bigger project, he defends the claim that killing animals causes them harm. He uses an analysis of harm that says that to harm someone “is to do something which adversely affects that individual’s interests.”⁷⁹ So one harms another being when one sets back or frustrates the interests of that being. By interests Curnutt appeals to the most fundamental type: welfare interests. These interests are the most important type “because they are definitive of a basic well-being...[and] because their realisation is necessary before one can satisfy virtually any other interest.”⁸⁰

A being cannot just possess interests. Rather, there is a close connection between interests and desires. Now, it may be true that something can be in a being’s interest even when that being does not desire it, for example, to be in physically healthy shape is in my interest, but I need not desire to be in physically healthy shape. However, it cannot be the case that something is in a being’s interest if that being has no desires whatsoever, or is unable to have desires. This would amount to allowing that plants have interests, even though they have no desires. So the argument shifts to discovering which beings can have the relevant desires that will afford them interests, that in turn will make harming them wrong. In particular, Curnutt’s aim is to show that animals can have these desires.

He asks why anyone would think that they do not have desires, since we unproblematically attribute desires to animals routinely in much the same way as we do with persons: as an explanation of their behaviour. Saying that an animal wants *x* based on the animal doing something is “an extremely common locution for those who are in contact with animals.”⁸¹ For example, if my dog came up to me with his bowl in his mouth, then I would infer that he wants to be fed. Since no one denies that people can have desires, then what reason may we have to say that animals do not?

One possible response is to say that animals do not have the specific desire to live. In objecting to Curnutt’s argument, Ruth Cigman asserts that they do not have this desire to live because they are not capable of having “categorical desires”.⁸² She denies that

⁷⁸ Curnutt, J. ‘A New Argument for Vegetarianism’ in *Ethics for Everyday*. Benatar, D [Ed]. 2002. McGraw-Hill.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 410

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 410

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 411

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 412

animals have these categorical desires because to have them requires that animals be able to understand and comprehend concepts such as life, death, the future and relations with others. Death can only be a harm for beings that possess these concepts, and animals do not possess them.

However, Cigman does not actually give an argument for this view, that is, she does not tell us why a being needs categorical desires in order to have a desire to live. Curnutt maintains that the observations we make of animal activities, such as “fleeing from predators and enemies, seeking cover from severe weather, tending to injuries (such as they can), struggling to extricate themselves from potentially fatal situations, and exhibiting palpable fear in the face of threats to their lives” are enough to attribute to them a desire to live.⁸³ Moreover, he says that these activities are not just instinct, “they are purposive and deliberate with a particular point to them, namely, to maintain that life.”⁸⁴

Therefore, if it is plausible to believe that animals can have desires, then it is plausible to believe that they can have interests. And they need not even have these interests to a great degree, for all we require to make killing an animal wrong is time-relative interests that are substantially weaker than those of a person. All an animal needs to possess, in order to make killing it wrong, is a weak time-relative interest in continuing to live.

Over and above providing an argument that concludes that killing animals is wrong, I have also put forward another objection against the strategy of demi-vegetarianism. Demi-vegetarianism makes the assumption that killing animals painlessly for food is acceptable, but I have shown this to be false. Therefore, demi-vegetarianism fails firstly as a strategy for preventing the suffering of animals, and secondly by mistakenly endorsing the killing of animals for food.

There is, however, one possible response that the demi-vegetarian could make. They could grant that killing an animal for food may be wrong, but that that does not necessarily make eating meat wrong. In other words, what is it about the individual practice of eating meat that makes it wrong? This response questions the causal

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 413

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 413

connection between the wrongness involved in killing animals for food and the wrongness involved in eating meat.

This response raises an interesting point, and indeed more needs to be said about why eating meat is itself wrong. Reasons given for abstaining from meat products are, for instance, that it is a symbolic protest against the way animals are used for our benefit. Or perhaps one can insist that their personal action will affect the meat industry. But eating meat, if we are to show how it is wrong, must be more than just doing one's fair share. In response to this objection, I will now present an argument that distinguishes eating meat as a specific wrongness.

The wrongness of consumption can be tied to the harm done to the animal if we can show that it is wrong to cooperate in and benefit from a defeat of the basic well-being of the animals. This can be taken in the following way: eating meat is wrong because it creates a market for meat. In other words, no animals would be slaughtered for food if no-one actually ate meat. For example, most countries no longer endorse whaling, and the practice (for the most part) ceases to exist because there is no longer a market for whale products. In the same way, the support of the meat industry therefore actually perpetuates that industry, and in doing so perpetuates the wrongness involved in killing animals for food.

But the bond between the killing of animals for food and the consumption of meat is even stronger than this. I argue that these independent practices are actually two parts of the same wrong. The act of eating meat is a participation in and a completion of an initial wrong act; that of killing an animal without good justification. Consider Tzachi Zamir's analogy of snuff movies. Victims of snuff movies have been killed *so that* someone could watch them die later. The consumption, the watching of the movie, "is a *completion* of the initial action."⁸⁵ Part of the action done in the past was predicated on an unspecified individual who it is assumed will function in a particular way. By becoming that individual, one completes the action, and thereby makes it whole.⁸⁶ In other words, the consumption is the commissioning of the killing.

⁸⁵ Zamir, p. 2

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 2

So, the victim involved in the snuff movie was not just killed; she was killed so that someone could watch her die later. Analogously, the animal on the farm was not just killed; it was killed so that at a later stage it could be consumed. These actions have an “extended temporal structure.”⁸⁷ There is an initial action involving particular agents and victims, and this action – the action of killing an animal for food – has already been shown to be wrong. There is, however, also a specified end with an undesignated agent. When one chooses to become that undesignated agent, that is, when one chooses to purchase and consume the flesh of that animal, then the action is completed. This way of looking at things – consumption not as distinct from the initial wrong, but as a carrying out of it – brings out the sense in which the consumption and the killing are parts of the same wrong. Therefore, eating meat is wrong because it is the completion of a larger, temporally extended, wrong action.

This, of course, raises another pertinent question. I have argued that killing animals for food is wrong because such a reason is not good enough justification. But when is killing an animal going to be justified? What about other reasons for killing animals such as for sacrifices or other traditional ceremonies? I argue that whatever reasons are given as justifications for killing animals are only going to be good enough reasons if they can override the wrongness done to the animal, based on the animal’s small level of self-awareness. In chapter 3 I will discuss what those reasons might be, and indeed, if they are good enough to justify the killing of an animal. For now, it is enough that I have responded to this demi-vegetarian objection by arguing that eating meat is in fact wrong because it is the completion of an initial wrong.⁸⁸

Thus far, I have argued that animals can suffer to a significant degree. I have also argued that, although there is much less intrinsic wrongness involved in killing an animal, the fact that they may have a limited amount of self-awareness means that we need to provide good justification for doing so, and killing for food is not good justification. This raises the question, however, of whether killing an animal to prevent it from suffering is a good enough justification, taking into account what has been said about the significance

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁸⁸ I acknowledge that this commits me to the position that eating meat will not be wrong if it did not come from an animal that suffered or was killed for food, for instance an animal that died naturally. Because there is no wrongness involved in an animal dying naturally, there cannot, on this position, be any wrongness involved in eating that flesh.

of animal suffering. This could be an alternative strategy to prevent animal suffering. I will now briefly discuss this strategy.

4. A further possible strategy: mass-killing

According to this view, killing is an acceptable way of preventing an animal from suffering. The assumption is that death is preferable for an animal, for its own sake, to the suffering it endures in factory farm conditions. This assumption underlies the position that many people take on animals. Take strays, for example: most people would readily approve of euthanasia in a case where a stray animal was going to endure suffering if it was not put down. Therefore, if the suffering of animals in factory farm conditions matters to a significant degree (perhaps even in much the same way as human suffering does), and putting them out of their misery is a good justification for killing them (as opposed to killing them for food), then it seems that we should endorse this strategy of mass killing. Killing all farm animals painlessly would be the most reliable way of eliminating animal suffering.

Our earlier focus on time-relative interests may even strengthen this argument. Recall I argued that death is a lesser misfortune for an animal because the amount of good an animal loses through being killed is typically much less than that which a person loses, and the prudential unity relations that would bind the animal to itself in the future would be comparatively weak. If the suffering an animal endures is immediate, then, according to this argument, it's time-relative interest in avoiding this suffering will be stronger than it's time-relative interest in a remoter good. This is because it's prudential unity relations diminish in strength with time and are therefore stronger over short periods.⁸⁹ In such a scenario then, it may actually be in an animal's time-relative interest to die rather than continue to live. For example, people usually kill horses with broken legs almost right after the injury has happened, and this seems justified because the horse's time-relative interest in dying is much stronger than any remote good it may have in the future, if it even has a good. In current practices on factory farms the suffering that animals endure is almost certainly immediate. And, for the animal, there is very little

⁸⁹ McMahan, p. 202

chance of a remote good in the future outweighing the significance of the suffering that occurs immediately. Therefore, it seems that TRIA backs up this alternative strategy that argues that we ought to kill all the animals in order to eliminate their immediate suffering.

Furthermore, based on their time-relative interests, there is an asymmetry in an animal's capacity for happiness and suffering. As was noted earlier, animals are incapable of many of the higher dimensions of well-being accessible to persons. This is why the amount of good an animal loses by dying is typically much less than the amount of good a person loses. However, although their capacity for suffering is limited in similar ways – as there is little scope for genuine tragedy – animals can get far closer to the depths of human suffering than they can to the heights of human well-being.⁹⁰ This is because the worst forms of suffering, such as brute physical pain, are experienced by animals in much the same way as humans. It is for this reason that animal suffering matters significantly. Therefore, when an animal living in factory farm conditions faces the prospect of suffering, this is significant in comparison with any goods the animal may experience for two reasons. Firstly, as argued above, the suffering is immediate, and secondly, the animal is incapable of experiencing a sufficient amount of good to outweigh this suffering. It seems reasonable therefore to kill all the animals in order to prevent this suffering.

However, I argue that there are two problems with this alternative. Firstly, the only reason that most farm animals are brought into existence in the first place is to raise them and slaughter them for food. Therefore, the only reason these animals are suffering in the first place is because we are keeping them in conditions that make them suffer, so we can later kill them for food. I have already argued, however, that because these animals have at least some self-awareness, this is not a good justification for killing them. The argument that we should kill all the animals to prevent their suffering is therefore a *reductio ad absurdum*. These animals would not be suffering if they were not brought into existence to be killed for food in the first place, and I have already argued that this is wrong. If anything, what should be stopped is bringing so many of these animals into existence and keeping them in such horrendous conditions while they are alive.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 203

Secondly, those who campaign for the prevention of animal suffering presumably care for the well-being of these animals. That is, it is not just about preventing suffering in the world, it is about preventing the suffering of animals in the world, and the wrongness of cruelty to animals. I argue that killing all the animals as a strategy for eliminating this suffering will therefore be self-defeating. The project of preventing animal suffering generally aims to give animals a happy, or even just cruelty-free, life. Killing all the animals not only eliminates animal suffering but also eliminates all the animals, and this is hardly an outcome that anyone who cares for the animals' well-being is going to accept.

One might respond by saying that if everyone stops eating meat then, eventually, the animals will all die anyway. In other words, this is just prolonging the inevitable. What the mass killing strategy does, at least, is to stop the animals suffering by killing them all quickly and painlessly. I argue, however, that it is not clear that the animals will die out should everyone stop eating meat. Firstly, this is a theoretical consequence that will come into effect *only if* everyone stops eating meat, which is not going to happen in the foreseeable future. And secondly, uses can be found for most of the animals currently slaughtered for food. For example, cows and chickens can be farmed only for dairy and eggs (I say 'only' because currently they are farmed for these products and then when this use runs out they are also slaughtered for food), sheep can be farmed for wool, and some pigs could even be kept as pets, or let back into the wild and left to forage naturally. I will say more about this in the next chapter, but for now suffice to say that it is not clear that all the animals will eventually die if everyone stops eating meat, therefore it is not a good reason for us to kill them all now. I argue therefore that the strategy of killing all the animals to prevent their suffering is a flawed one, and, moreover, is self-defeating.

This chapter has discussed two strategies for preventing the suffering of animals that are raised for food. Both demi-vegetarianism and mass killing, however, are flawed and are therefore implausible strategies that should not be adopted. With no headway made with either of these, we are forced then to assess another possible strategy: vegetarianism.

Chapter 3

Assessing vegetarianism as a possible strategy for preventing animal suffering

From chapters 1 and 2 we can draw two main conclusions. Firstly, animals can suffer to a significant degree. And secondly, it is wrong to kill animals for food because they have at least a minimal level of self-awareness. The first of these conclusions led us to pursue a strategy for overcoming the wrongness involved in raising animals for food. That is, because animals suffer in factory farm conditions, we need to find the best way to prevent this suffering. Demi-vegetarianism was considered as a first option, but was found to be implausible for a number of reasons. The most telling of these was that demi-vegetarianism saw no wrongness involved in killing animals for food. However, having analysed arguments for this, I concluded that this is in fact wrong. Mass killing was then briefly considered as a second option, but this too was discarded.

With the two conclusions above as the foundation of this discussion, I now proceed to examine another possible strategy: vegetarianism. I argue that what we require for vegetarianism to be the best possible option for preventing animal suffering is the following: firstly, it must fare better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the same problems brought against the demi-vegetarian strategy in Chapter 2. Secondly, it should support the above two conclusions. Thirdly, it has to overcome any new objections levelled against it. I will not go into any of the standard – that is, utilitarian or deontological – arguments for vegetarianism as my aim is just to show what the best way of preventing animal suffering would be.⁹¹

1. Vegetarianism:

Firstly, I will briefly define vegetarianism and explain what it aims to accomplish. Vegetarians do not eat any meat whatsoever, although they may purchase and consume other animal products, such as dairy and eggs. Vegetarians therefore take the boycotting

⁹¹ As I noted in the introduction, handling the issue of vegetarianism in these traditional ways is problematic. I want to move away from these approaches and instead concentrate on the immediate goal of preventing the suffering of animals that are farmed for food.

of meat products a step further than demi-vegetarians. Vegetarianism is a protest against the killing of animals for food, and, as was discussed, this is not a step that demi-vegetarianism endorses.

Generally, vegetarians do not eat meat because they believe the killing of animals for food to be wrong. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the practice of killing animals for food and the practice of eating meat are connected in different ways. Whatever the reasons for not partaking in the latter, vegetarianism can also be an effective strategy for preventing the suffering of animals that are raised for food. It is argued that eliminating meat from our diets will cause the market for meat to decline until eventually it will no longer be feasible to farm animals for food. Animals would not be slaughtered for food without a demand for meat. We have already established that when they are raised for food in factory farm conditions animals suffer immensely. Therefore those who eat meat are keeping the demand for meat alive and, at the same time, perpetuating this suffering.

Vegetarianism aims to prevent the suffering of animals that are raised for food by advocating the boycotting of this practice altogether. In not eating meat, one does not perpetuate the suffering involved in this practice. And, even stronger, widespread, collective vegetarianism will have the effect of eliminating this practice altogether, as there will no longer be a demand for meat.⁹²

Having determined how vegetarianism can help prevent animal suffering, we can ask first: do any of the problems that were raised against demi-vegetarianism apply to vegetarianism? If they do, then vegetarianism will only fare as well as demi-vegetarianism, which was not very well at all. If, on the other hand, vegetarianism can be shown to fare better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of these problems, then we have a first, good reason to adopt vegetarianism as the best possible strategy for preventing animal suffering.

2. Some initial problems for vegetarianism:

⁹² Just as by eliminating the demand for whale products, the whaling industry, for the most part, ceases to exist.

Firstly, demi-vegetarianism allows for the farming of animals for food, just so long as this is done humanely. In other words, its main preoccupation is with the suffering of the animals while they are alive. The objection was raised, however, that it may not be possible to farm animals for food in a humane way. In other words, there may still be suffering involved. This, however, is contrary to our aim, which is to prevent suffering as best we can.

In assessing whether this objection applies to vegetarianism, I argue that a distinction should be made between farming animals for food and farming animals without killing them. Vegetarianism aims to stop farming animals for food altogether, so in this case the problem does not apply. That is, vegetarianism automatically prevents all the suffering that goes on in farming animals for food because it advocates eliminating this practice. Therefore, vegetarianism immediately fares better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of this worry.

However, vegetarianism does allow for the farming of animals for other products, such as dairy, eggs and wool. The question can therefore be raised as to whether this sort of farming can be done humanely. This is an issue I will deal with later when I address the question of the necessity of veganism. For now it will suffice to say that vegetarianism would indeed prevent more suffering than demi-vegetarianism because it only needs to deal with the practices of raising animals for products other than their meat. By eliminating the meat industry, vegetarianism would succeed in eliminating all the suffering that goes along with it, and indeed, suffering that is unique to it, such as transportation to the slaughterhouse and the terror involved in the slaughtering process itself. Therefore, I argue that vegetarianism would indeed prevent more suffering than demi-vegetarianism.

Secondly, it was shown that the economics might in fact backfire against demi-vegetarianism, especially in poorer communities. Demi-vegetarianism projected a specific scenario where people would choose ethically-produced meat products over factory-farmed products. This would then force factory farms to either stop the production of meat or change their practices, and this would help prevent animal suffering. As an objection, I raised a few alternative, and equally probable, scenarios that showed that something quite different might happen and the desired result might in fact

backfire. To a certain extent, the same is true of vegetarianism. It aims to stop meat consumption, and thereby eliminate the killing of animals for food. However, it is not certain that this would be the case. Indeed, as Hare points out, factory farms may end up monopolising the meat market, for as long as it exists anyway, and such a scenario would not help prevent animal suffering.

I argue, however, that vegetarianism is more specific in its aim. If everyone gave up eating meat, there would be no demand for meat, and the practice of producing meat would stop. This projection is more straightforward than the ambiguous demi-vegetarian scenario. The only thing that would hamper the goal of vegetarianism would be people who refused to give up eating meat, which would keep the market alive.⁹³ Suffice to say then that this second objection is less of a worry for vegetarianism than it is for demi-vegetarianism.

Furthermore, the alternative that vegetarianism offers the meat eater will not be more expensive than meat, as is the case with demi-vegetarianism. Therefore, the less affluent communities do not pose as much of a threat to vegetarianism. A vegetarian diet is cheaper than a meat diet, and, moreover, is accessible to everyone. Therefore, vegetarianism would not backfire in the case where people could not afford to buy the more expensive alternative, because vegetables are cheaper than meat, organic or otherwise.

Finally, I argued that the biggest problem for demi-vegetarianism is that killing animals for food is not justified, and is therefore wrong. Vegetarianism, on the other hand, does not demand that we kill animals for food. In fact, it prescribes exactly the opposite: that we eliminate this practice. This objection, that is so problematic for demi-vegetarianism, does not apply to vegetarianism.

I conclude therefore that vegetarianism does indeed fare better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the same problems raised against the demi-vegetarian strategy in Chapter 2. Thus, the first step in assessing whether vegetarianism will be a better strategy to adopt in order to help prevent animal suffering is successful.

I will now show how vegetarianism supports the two main conclusions of the paper – that animals can suffer and that killing animals for food is wrong – by providing

⁹³ I will address this objection later in the chapter.

an argument for vegetarianism that concentrates on our already-existing and widely-held beliefs. In fact, I will argue that vegetarianism follows from these conclusions and these non-contentious beliefs. As the aim of the chapter is to find the best possible strategy for preventing animal suffering, it is integral that vegetarianism supports the conclusions that the thesis has drawn thus far.

Before I start though, it will be helpful to retrace our steps in greater detail to show how we came to the conclusions of chapter 1 and chapter 2. In chapter 1 I argued that if we are to know anything about the mental states of animals, then we need to first establish that we can know of another's mental states at all. I considered a number of arguments from the philosophy of mind in order to show that it is plausible to believe that we can know of mental states that are not our own. I then concluded that it is rational to believe that animals can feel pain, and that they suffer when raised in factory farm conditions. Furthermore, such a conclusion, I argued, is significant in all the ways that it can be: it is valuable, meaningful, important, and carries weight. Therefore, the argument that animals can feel pain is sound and the conclusion is significant, and it is rational to believe such a claim.

In chapter 2 I considered a first possible strategy for preventing this animal suffering. Having discussed the proposed benefits of demi-vegetarianism, I then countered with a few objections. One objection in particular proved to be the most damaging: by definition, demi-vegetarianism is forced to accept that killing animals for food is acceptable, however I argued that such a practice is in fact unjustified. Killing an animal without good justification is wrong when animals have a certain amount of self-awareness, which, I argue, the animals in question do. If this argument is sound, then killing animals for food is wrong, and demi-vegetarianism is fatally flawed.

Sound, rational argument has therefore provided the reader with these two main conclusions. However, I will now show, using a number of related beliefs, how vegetarianism actually follows from them. Showing how vegetarianism supports these conclusions gives us yet another reason to accept it as the best strategy for preventing animal suffering.

3. How does vegetarianism support the two main conclusions drawn thus far?

Engel argues that there are some beliefs, normally considered non-contentious, that can be attributed to rational people who live in agriculturally bountiful societies where there is also a wealth of nutritionally adequate alternatives to meat.⁹⁴ I will now discuss a number of these beliefs.

I have already argued for the claims that animals can suffer and that killing animals for food is wrong. To this Engel adds (1) other things being equal, a world with less suffering is better than a world with more suffering, and (2) a world with less unnecessary suffering is better than a world with more unnecessary suffering.⁹⁵ The first of these is a reasonable assumption, and it is one that I made before the first argument in chapter 1. The second belief alludes to the point that, for the audience in question anyway, eating meat is in fact unnecessary.

He then argues that (3) unnecessary cruelty is wrong and *prima facie* should not be supported or encouraged, and (4) even a “minimally decent person” would take steps to help reduce the amount of unnecessary suffering in the world.⁹⁶

Engel then establishes that (5) the reader is one who would take steps to help reduce the amount of suffering in the world, and, importantly, this can be done with very little effort on the reader’s part.⁹⁷ He then argues that the reader also believes the first of my conclusions: (6) many nonhuman animals are capable of feeling pain, and finally, (7) it is morally wrong to cause an animal unnecessary suffering.⁹⁸

There are a number of other beliefs that Engel lists, 16 in all, but I need not discuss them all here. My aim is to show that vegetarianism supports the two main conclusions I have drawn thus far in the paper. By utilising Engel’s arguments on beliefs, I will now show that not only does vegetarianism support these two conclusions, it actually follows from them. In other words, vegetarianism is the logical conclusion of

⁹⁴ Engel, M. ‘The Immorality of Eating Meat’ in *The Moral Life*, Pojman, L. P. 2000. Oxford University Press. p. 859

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 859

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 860

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 860

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 860

these beliefs, and as such it serves as a very effective strategy for preventing animal suffering.

The main implication of these beliefs, says Engel, is that you are committed to giving up eating meat. But how do they imply that one ought to refrain from this practice?

I have argued that animals are capable of experiencing pain, and moreover, this is something that the reader believes anyway. It is not a far stretch therefore to conclude that, because factory farming causes animals intense pain and suffering, other things being equal, the world would be a better place if this practice were eliminated. Also, in modern societies, the consumption of meat is in no way necessary for human survival. So, because we believe that a world with less unnecessary suffering is better than a world with more unnecessary suffering, we can conclude also that the pain and suffering that results from meat production is entirely unnecessary.

Next, because of the belief that unnecessary cruelty is wrong and *prima facie* should not be supported or encouraged, we can say that factory farming is wrong and *prima facie* ought not be supported or encouraged. When one purchases factory farm meat, then “one *is* supporting these farms monetarily and thereby encouraging their *unnecessary* cruel practices.”⁹⁹ The only way to actively avoid supporting this practice is to stop buying these products.

From these three beliefs, as well as the belief that even a minimally decent person would take steps to help reduce the amount of unnecessary suffering in the world, it follows that we ought to stop purchasing and consuming meat.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the reader also believes that he/she is one who would take steps to help reduce the amount of suffering in the world, and, for convenience sake, this can be done with very little effort on the reader’s part. By very little effort I am referring to the fact that one needs only eat something other than meat to help reduce the amount of suffering in the world. Therefore, as Engel concludes, consistency forces the reader to admit that meat consumption is wrong.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 869

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 870

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 872

By linking the two conclusions drawn in the paper thus far with some of our widely-held beliefs that commit us to a vegetarian diet, I have therefore shown that vegetarianism supports the conclusions that animals can suffer and killing animals for food is wrong. More importantly though, this argument helps show how vegetarianism can be a plausible strategy for preventing the suffering of animals that are raised for food. That is, in adopting vegetarianism and boycotting meat products one is committed to minimising the amount of animal suffering in the world.

As my aim is to find the best strategy for preventing animal suffering, I need only assess vegetarianism in this capacity. Showing that it follows from the conclusions I have established in the paper thus far therefore gives us a second reason to believe that it is the best strategy for preventing animal suffering.

4. A conductive argument for vegetarianism:

So far then we have two good reasons to conclude that vegetarianism is the best strategy for preventing animal suffering: (1) Vegetarianism is the best strategy for preventing animal suffering because (2) it fares better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the same problems brought against the demi-vegetarian strategy in Chapter 2, and (3) it supports the two main conclusions that we have drawn in the paper thus far. Conclusion (1) follows from reasons (2) and (3). We have therefore established a conductive argument for vegetarianism.

In cases where we are making practical or ethical decisions, such as this one regarding the best strategy for preventing animal suffering, conductive arguments are both applicable and important. Indeed, they are common in reasoning about practical affairs, where a number of separate factors seem to have a bearing on our decision about what to do. In a conductive argument, the premises count separately in favour of the conclusion. They are put forward as separately relevant to the conclusion and, unlike deductive arguments, need not be linked together to offer support. If one or more premises are removed, the relevance to the conclusion of the remaining premises would be unaffected.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Govier, T. *A Practical Study of Argument*. 1997. Wadsworth Publishing Company. p. 388

In a conductive argument, each premise taken by itself provides some reason to accept the conclusion. This is why they are separately relevant. So, (2) vegetarianism fares better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the same problems raised in Chapter 2, and (3) vegetarianism supports the two main conclusions of the paper, are separately relevant premises in the argument and separately they give us a reason to accept vegetarianism as the conclusion. Even if one of these were found to be flawed or unacceptable in some way, the other would still count in support of the conclusion. Taken together, however, as they should be because they bear on the same conclusion, they provide better support for that conclusion.¹⁰³ Each premise is both “collectively relevant and separately relevant to establishing the conclusion.”¹⁰⁴

In assessing a conductive argument, however, we need to make reference not just to the positive premises, nor just to their separate relevance to the conclusion, but we must also “consider the premises together, in the light of other evidence that might count against the conclusion.”¹⁰⁵ In a good conductive argument the premises must be positively relevant to the conclusion, just as premises (2) and (3) are to conclusion (1). But “how strongly they support the conclusion can only be determined by considering them in the light of points that are negatively relevant to that conclusion.”¹⁰⁶ These negative points are counterconsiderations.

Although they work against the desired conclusion, counterconsiderations can strengthen an argument by forcing one to consider the evidence against the position, and therefore help to reach a stronger conclusion. If one still wants to reach the conclusion that the positive premises point to, but also wants to acknowledge counterconsiderations, then one is committed to the judgement that the positive premises are stronger and more convincing than the negative ones. I will now discuss two possible counterconsiderations that can be raised to negatively affect the conclusion of vegetarianism. These counterconsiderations can be treated as objections against vegetarianism.

5. Two further objections against vegetarianism:

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 390

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 389

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 388

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 391

i) Undesirable consequences:

Two objections that are frequently raised against vegetarianism are (4) that it has undesirable consequences in the future, and (5) that, as a strategy, it is not feasible. The argument so far then may be illustrated as follows:

(1) Vegetarianism is the best strategy for preventing animal suffering because (2) it fares better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the problems raised in Chapter 2, and (3) it supports the two main conclusions that we have drawn in the paper thus far. However (4) it does have undesirable consequences in the future, and (5) it is just not feasible.

Reasons (2) and (3) point positively to the conclusion (1), but counterconsiderations (4) and (5) put that conclusion in doubt. I will now evaluate these two objections, (4) and (5), so that we may judge which premises in the conductive argument are stronger, and whether vegetarianism is a justified conclusion.

The first of these objections targets what is seen as an inevitable, but undesirable, consequence of collective vegetarianism. It is an objection I touched on in chapter 2. It is argued that by giving up eating meat, we are also giving up any reason we have for bringing these animals into existence. In other words, these animals would not be around were it not for those who eat meat. Therefore, collective vegetarianism would, in the long run, lead to the extinction of all the animals that we currently use for food. This objection is one that is raised regularly, and it is one reason why some have chosen to pursue a demi-vegetarian route. However, I argue that the objection carries little weight, and I will offer four responses.

Firstly, the hypothesis that all the animals that we currently farm for food are going to become extinct is, I argue, a remote consequence. That is, at this point in time, it is a scenario that we need not even consider when our current aim is to prevent the suffering that these animals are enduring. I have provided two reasons that point to vegetarianism as being the best strategy for preventing animal suffering. If this is the case, and such prevention is possible, then why would we give an equal amount of concern to hypothetical animals in the future as we do to the animals that are currently living? I argue that we ought not to. The issue, it seems, is one of immediate suffering

versus an undesirable, but remote, consequence, and I argue that the immediate suffering is what we ought to be concerned about.

Consider, for example, the recent debate surrounding HIV-AIDS in South Africa. AIDS dissidents argue that HIV does not cause AIDS, when the general consensus in the scientific community is that it does. Most argue that anti-retroviral drugs, which help prevent HIV turning into full-blown AIDS, should be distributed to those affected with HIV. AIDS dissidents, however, because of their belief that HIV does not cause AIDS (and, it must be noted, for other reasons), disagree with this and argue that it may be harmful. What we have then is the immediate benefit that anti-retroviral drugs bring being denied to those living with HIV because, for AIDS dissidents, the debate still continues as to whether HIV does in fact cause AIDS.

The issue in this example then is, once again, immediate suffering versus a remote consequence. The worry is that HIV does not cause AIDS, and so administering anti-retroviral drugs to people living with HIV is unnecessary, and may, more to the point, have undesirable consequences. There are, however, millions of people who endure immediate suffering as they live with this debilitating illness. Even if administering anti-retroviral drugs has undesirable consequences in the future, and it is certainly not clear that it does, the immediate suffering of all those currently infected with HIV should take precedence.

Analogously, we should not worry about the extinction of farm animals in the future – a remote consequence – when there is immediate suffering for the animals living now. We should instead be helping to prevent the suffering of animals living in factory farm conditions. It is therefore not very fair, nor very constructive, to use an undesirable future state of affairs as an objection against vegetarianism.

Secondly, this hypothesis of the extinction of the animals makes a mistaken assumption. It is assumed that, because of collective vegetarianism, there will have to be a mass killing of all the animals that would have been used for food. In other words, it mistakenly projects a cataclysmic extinction of all the animals that vegetarians themselves fought so hard to protect. This, however, is not the case.

If collective vegetarianism is adopted to the degree that this objection supposes, then there will not come a time when such a mass killing will have to take place. It will

not be through killing, but rather through reduced breeding, that the animals will become extinct, if that even happens. As was discussed earlier, vegetarianism aims to eliminate the demand for meat products in the meat market. If it is successful, less and less meat will be produced. Less and less animals will therefore be brought into existence, simply because they are not in demand. Instead of a mass killing, there will therefore be a gradual reduction in the numbers of the animals. This is currently how farmers control the number of animals they bring into existence anyway. In the case of collective vegetarianism, they will just bring a considerably smaller amount into existence.

However, the scenario that this objection raises is a hypothetical one, not a practical one. Therefore, as a third response, I argue that it is not even clear that the animals in question will become extinct if collective vegetarianism is adopted.

Animals that are killed for food can be spared extinction in a number of ways. Humans have control over what, and how many, animals they bring into existence, and for what reasons. We can therefore bring a reduced number of animals into existence, and do this for reasons other than killing for food. Laying hens can still be raised for eggs, cows and goats for dairy, and sheep for wool. As long as these practices are done humanely and with minimal suffering to the animals involved, there does not seem to be any wrongness involved.¹⁰⁷

There is still a worry, however, for the likes of bulls, male chicks, and pigs. These animals cannot be used for other reasons like the animals above. Is collective vegetarianism therefore flawed because it is predicated on an ideal which is a bad one for these animals?

Zamir argues that one possible answer is just to admit that non-existence is better than an existence of exploitation.¹⁰⁸ In other words, extinction might be a consequence of collective vegetarianism, but this is at least better, and prevents more suffering, than if the animals were brought into existence to live lives of suffering. But anyone concerned with the well-being of animals would want those animals around to enjoy their lives. This solution, like the option of mass-killing, is, in a way, self-defeating.

¹⁰⁷ This point will be raised again in the discussion of veganism later in the chapter.

¹⁰⁸ Zamir, p. 16

Zamir then proposes a milder solution.¹⁰⁹ Given that this consequence is currently a hypothetical one, we can also give a hypothetical response. Artificial insemination, he says, is widely practiced today on a number of animals, such as cows and turkeys. It is not inconceivable then that, at some future stage when we can use artificial insemination on all farm animals, semen differentiation can be used to solve the problem of 'unproductive' males while still preserving the species. We could then bring into the world only those bulls and male chicks that would be of use, and make sure that all the other animals were 'productive' females. In this way we still get to share the world with the animals we wanted and their extinction is therefore avoidable and unnecessary.

Such a response does not work for pigs though. Pigs are not raised for anything other than their flesh. As Hare says when he considers the problem, pigs "would certainly not be kept except for the bacon market."¹¹⁰

There is the possibility of returning at least some pigs to the wild, to forage on their own. Being hardy and highly adaptable, they would probably not fare too badly. The same could be said of some goats. But this possibility is not really feasible. Firstly, where in the 'wild' would these animals be let loose? There are very few areas that will be suitable for this move from farm to wild.

Secondly, as Zamir notes, the negative ecological consequences of setting some pigs free in the wild may outweigh the envisaged benefits.¹¹¹ Pigs are hardly a natural species anymore and might cause untold damage to an ecosystem and its inhabitants. There is also the possibility of keeping them in zoos or as pets. But neither of these options seem any more feasible, and it would only raise further questions of whether these practices themselves are cruel to the animals.

Zamir then considers a final possibility. He raises the idea of having positive obligations toward animals rather than negative responsibility. According to this, instead of focussing on the obligation not to harm animals, we rather have a duty to benefit them. Such a stance is often taken with endangered species. For instance, because there are so few black rhinos left in the wild, and because we value black rhinos and want to keep them around, we have a duty to benefit them. We make sure they are protected by anti-

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 16

¹¹⁰ Hare, p. 240

¹¹¹ Zamir, p. 16

poaching laws, that they have a comfortable habitat, that they are breeding successfully etc. The same could be done then with pigs, perhaps with even more enthusiasm, because, not only will they be an endangered species at that point, but they would also have had a history of heavy exploitation. To right the wrong we might then adopt this stance of having positive obligations towards pigs and ensure that they remain in our world. These thoughts on positive obligations, says Zamir, point to a solution “in which it will be the responsibility of humans to create conditions that allow pigs to somehow survive.”¹¹²

Collective vegetarianism therefore need not involve the extinction of all the species that we use for food today. I argue further though, as a fourth and final response to this objection, that a reduction in the number of these animals might actually have a number of positive effects.

Firstly, a reduction in the number of these animals corrects the artificial growth in the number of lives that should not be lived, but are lived now, i.e. the billions of animals that are brought into existence annually to be slaughtered for food. And secondly, this reduction benefits the environment and many other sentient creatures. In response to the objection then, I will now give a brief ecological argument for vegetarianism.

Healthy ecosystems and land set aside for the production of meat are two incompatible ideas. Forests (or any other natural environment) and meat compete for the same land. The demand for meat, however, means that agribusiness and the corporations that make it up are able to pay more for land than those who want to preserve or restore the natural environment. Therefore, I will now show why it is in our interests to stop eating meat and in doing so promote healthy ecosystems.

As a side point, I acknowledge, and this is an integral first premise of the ecological argument, that crop farming can also be detrimental to the environment. That is, although omnivorous diets are ecologically destructive, this does not imply that all vegetarian diets are ecologically benign. However, less cultivation is needed to feed vegetarians than omnivores because the animals eaten by omnivores must themselves be fed by vegetation grown on the land. The nutritional value of this vegetation is used by the animals for their own bodies' maintenance. So people who eat plants instead of

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 16

feeding them to animals can feed themselves by growing fewer plants and in doing this they will therefore cultivate less land.¹¹³

It is in our interests to cultivate less land because such cultivation is detrimental to the health of an ecosystem. An ecosystem has value, in the way discussed in Chapter 1, when it is healthy, and the most beneficial state for all sentient beings is to be part of a healthy ecosystem. According to Peter Wenz, one ecosystem is healthier than another "if it has a greater ability to regenerate itself."¹¹⁴ Wenz gives the example of Central Illinois. Being under cultivation, a few species on this land are over-represented at the expense of other diverse and indigenous species. Soil is eroding fast, which means that more fertilizers are being put into it, and insect populations are on the rise, which means that more pesticides need to be used. The capacity for self-regeneration is thus very limited. On the other hand, a healthy ecosystem can regenerate itself because it is made up of natural, indigenous properties, and is not in need of such artificial assistance.

Wenz raises an objection that is similar to one Hare makes in his paper on demi-vegetarianism.¹¹⁵ Some land, it is argued, is not suitable for growing plants, and therefore can only be used for animal farming. This is especially true of mountainous areas. But perhaps on this sort of land animals more suited to the landscape, such as goats and sheep, can be farmed for dairy or wool products instead of meat. In other words, we need not kill the animals just because they are all that can be farmed on such difficult terrain.

Therefore, it is in the best interests of our environment as a whole if as little cultivation as possible took place. Currently, we are cultivating land in order to produce grain to feed to animals that we then slaughter for food. This over-cultivation promotes unhealthy ecosystems. But, the cultivation of land can be minimised if we stopped producing grains to feed to these animals. A reduction in the number of these animals therefore has the positive effect of increasing the health of our environment, because less cultivation will take place. Ceasing to eat meat helps to restore some land to a more natural state.

That it can overcome this objection in such a positive way is, I argue, further evidence that vegetarianism is the best strategy to adopt. I have given four responses to

¹¹³ Wenz, P. 'An Ecological Argument for Vegetarianism' in *Ethics and Animals*, No. 5, March 1984, p. 2

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 2

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 2

the objection that vegetarianism has undesirable consequences. I argue, therefore, that this counterconsideration is unsuccessful and cannot be used as a negative reason against vegetarianism. In fact, I argue that the responses to the objection are strong enough to count as a positive reason for vegetarianism. Counterconsideration (4) falls away and instead can be replaced by positive reason (6): vegetarianism has beneficial consequences, such as minimising the cultivation of land and thus increasing the health of the environment. The argument therefore now goes as follows:

(1) Vegetarianism is the best strategy for preventing animal suffering because (2) it fares better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the problems brought against the demi-vegetarian strategy in Chapter 2, (3) it supports the two main conclusions that we have drawn in the paper thus far, and (6) it beneficial consequences, such as minimising the cultivation of land and thus increasing the health of the environment. However, (5) it is just not feasible.

There are now three positive reasons for the conclusion of vegetarianism. However, I will now assess the remaining counterconsideration that negatively affects this conclusion.

ii) As a strategy, vegetarianism is just not feasible:

It could be argued that vegetarianism is just not a feasible option because too many people refuse to change their diet to one that leaves out meat. Surveys indicate that between only 3% and 5% of the population in developed countries practice vegetarianism.¹¹⁶ I will now discuss reasons for why this might be the case. These reasons I will call non-moral reasons, and if they are correct, then it seems that the obligation to stop eating meat because of the suffering it creates for animals can be ignored.

What reasons then can be given to justify the practice of meat eating? One could argue that a diet that incorporates meat products is healthier and more nutritious than one that does not. I, however, do not wish to get into a discussion of nutrition. It has been

¹¹⁶ Numerous statistics are provided on relevant websites such as Animal Ethics: Philosophical Discussion on the Moral Status of Nonhuman Animals (<http://animalethics.blogspot.com>).

widely acknowledged that eating too much meat is bad for one's health. But this does not mean that some meat is not nutritious, or that a diet without meat is better. I contend that, as long as vegetarians get the essential ingredients that make up a healthy diet from other sources, then nutrition cannot be used as an argument against vegetarianism. For instance, some argue that vegetarians lack enough protein in their diets because they do not eat meat. But protein can be gained from other sources such as beans and pulses, and cheese and eggs. One could also avoid meat and stay healthy by using the relevant supplements where necessary. Therefore, the argument from nutrition should make no impact on whether vegetarianism is a viable option or not. And it is certainly not a good objection against vegetarianism. In spite of this, there are some good non-moral reasons against giving up eating meat. Reasons of tradition, convenience, aesthetics, and others related to these will now be discussed.

Tradition carries a lot of weight when we question why we perform some social practices. People eat animals because they are in the habit of doing so, and because generations before them ate animals and so on. More than this though, eating animals can be seen as a part of one's culture, for example the Christmas turkey or South African 'braaivleis'. When people contemplate leaving meat out of their diets, they see such a practice as infringing on their regular, traditional practices, and so they decide that the latter is more important.

The same is true of convenience. Meat is consumed habitually – for many reasons, like the traditional-cultural reasons just discussed – and is prominent in the majority of meals, from bacon in the morning to steak at suppertime. Therefore it is in the interests of everyone – those who produce meat and those who consume meat – that it is supplied relatively cheaply and easily. It is important to note that this process is, however, a circular one, and could be halted rather quickly by consumers just giving up meat and thereby ending the demand. Convenience is, however, a strong reason to continue eating meat for those who are perhaps not willing to experiment with other, non-meat dishes.

Finally, aesthetics plays a role for some who refuse to give up meat. Different sorts of meat can be prepared for consumption in a number of different ways. These employ different techniques and recipes that make some meat dishes delightfully tasty;

too tasty in fact for those who cite this as an overriding reason against vegetarianism. Although he argues for vegetarianism, Zamir admits that there is much pleasure gained from eating meat. He says, “the distinct, irreplaceable, and at times intense pleasure of eating animal flesh need not be denied.”¹¹⁷ This reason, and other non-moral reasons concerning tradition, habit, culture and convenience, renders the moral reasons argued for in this paper inferior.

Before I respond to this objection, I need to make a brief point. Someone who does give these reasons greater weight than the prevention of animal suffering does not necessarily disagree that animal suffering matters. Indeed, one can oppose cruelty to animals that are raised for food, and argue, not that this belief is unjustified, but just that it does not imply that I ought to give up eating meat. In other words, such a person agrees that animals suffer in the farming process but gives his non-moral reasons more weight. The great taste of meat, for example, is simply more important to him than the suffering of animals.

I have argued, so far, that vegetarianism seems to be the best strategy for preventing animal suffering. But can any of these non-moral reasons override the argument that I have presented in favour of vegetarianism? I will now present three responses to this objection.

Firstly, non-moral reasons simply do not carry as much weight as moral reasons, such as those in the argument I have presented for giving up eating meat. In fact, as Stephen Cohen argues, a moral reason overrides other non-moral ones. There might be many reasons for something and many reasons against it, but no matter how many reasons on either side, “where the weight of morality comes down...is decisive in terms of the ‘logic’ of the reasons: moral reasons win.”¹¹⁸ This is a logical claim or a claim based on definition: what is meant in a reason’s having a moral status is that it takes precedence over other reasons.

Consider the following analogy of the habitual rapist. He could give the same sorts of non-moral reasons for continuing to rape women that the meat eater does for continuing to eat meat. That is, he enjoys the practice, it is convenient for him to do so

¹¹⁷ Zamir, p. 10

¹¹⁸ Cohen, S. *The Nature of Moral Reasoning*. 2004. Oxford University Press. p. 20

etc. But these reasons do not justify his practices because the moral reasons against rape are so much stronger.

I have argued that suffering is a bad thing, that animals can suffer, and do so on factory farms. Moreover I have argued that this suffering is significant and we should find the best strategy for preventing it. If that strategy is giving up eating meat, then that is what we ought to do because I am offering a moral reason. One does not even grapple with the issue on the same plane when one argues from reasons of tradition or convenience because these are non-moral reasons and such reasons can be overridden. Moral reasons win, not because of how many there are (there might only be one), but because of their character as moral reasons.

Consider another analogy: slavery is wrong because it involves the exploitation and suffering of innocent and unwilling individuals. The fact that at the time it was convenient, had tradition on its side, was a part of the culture etcetera, does not, and should never, make it acceptable. The same is true of the raising and killing of animals for food. There is a wrongness intrinsic to this practice that goes deeper than any of these non-moral reasons, and to respond with such reasoning does not capture the full significance of this wrongness.

The same analogy can also be used to show that just because one is in the minority, as vegetarians are, does not mean that the project is somehow hampered. Slave emancipators were, at some stage, in the minority, yet their project, because of the great wrongness of slavery, was still a worthy one. To say that moral reasons always win is not to say that a person will always act according to the decisiveness of moral reasons, nor is it to say that a person would never act contrary to what they believe to be a moral reason. It is just to say, in offering a reason as a moral reason, one should *act* according to it because it takes precedence over other reasons.¹¹⁹ Even though one is in the minority, as is the case with the slavery example and vegetarianism, one should still act according to the moral reasons.

Secondly, I have already shown, drawing on our widely-held beliefs, that we believe that we should not eat meat anyway. The argument regarding our beliefs, and indeed the conclusions that I have drawn from arguments in chapters 1 and 2, show that

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 20

most people, although they do not act accordingly, believe that they should stop eating meat more so than they believe that convenience, tradition, or any other non-moral reasons, are good reasons to continue eating meat.

If this is the case, then why is it that people do not act according to their beliefs? Firstly, it is more convenient to do the easier of two things. Vegetarianism does require changes in one's diet and lifestyle, and many people are not willing to make the change because they feel it is too much of an inconvenience. Moreover, the pleasure involved in eating meat is an intense and immediate one and, for many people, it is hard to give up such a satisfying pleasure. This is especially so because the reason for adopting vegetarianism is more remote and abstract. That is, the pleasure in knowing that one is contributing to animal well-being, for instance, is not as intense or immediate as the pleasure of eating meat.

It is difficult to show how one reason should trump another, that is, which of the conflicting values should instigate action. I can only refer to the last response and argue that the wrongness involved in raising animals for food gives one a much better moral reason for action than the convenience of eating meat, or the pleasure gained from consuming meat. Although these non-moral reasons play an important role in one's decision process, I argue that the beliefs that one has regarding animal suffering should outweigh these reasons, and should therefore encourage one to act accordingly.

Granted, people do not always act according to what they believe is the right thing to do. But this is not an objection against the point that overridingness is a condition of an opinion's being a moral one. The moral opinion is overriding in the sense of what one believes they should do, not what they will do.¹²⁰

Finally, I can grant that most people acknowledge that they should not eat meat, perhaps even for the reasons specified in this paper, yet they still do. It might be because of a lack of will power, or, in all probability, it is because of the non-moral reasons that I have discussed: reasons of taste, convenience, tradition etc. Although they will not, these will still carry more weight for some people than the belief that animal suffering should be prevented.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 21

I argue, however, that this argument does not apply to someone who has never tasted meat, or has never been in the habit of eating meat. Therefore, even though the meat-eater refuses to give up eating meat now, but acknowledges that this is what ought to be done, then he should raise his children as vegetarians.

Someone who has never eaten meat will not be swayed by these non-moral reasons because, for this person, eating meat is neither pleasurable nor convenient, they are not in the habit of doing so, and it is not a traditional practice. Such a person also shows that nutrition is not a good argument for vegetarianism. So, none of the non-moral reasons given for continuing to eat meat apply to someone who has never eaten meat. And this includes those who are yet to be brought into the world. Therefore, there do not seem to be any good reasons for not excluding meat from the diets of our children. This would indeed be a huge step forward for vegetarianism, and therefore a huge step towards helping to prevent animal suffering.

The proponent of this objection could provide a response that appeals to differential treatment based on some sort of hierarchy of beings. Because we have a higher level of rationality, self-awareness, capacity for language, and all the other properties that are usually listed to discern between different sorts of beings, then we could claim that beings that have a lower level of these capacities can be sacrificed for our well-being, or at least in order to preserve our higher capacities. So, because we are higher up on the scale and more advanced than the animals we eat, we can do what we want to them to preserve our superiority and well-being. Therefore, reasons like tradition or convenience, contrary to what I have argued, do indeed override the wrongness of killing a being that is lower down on this hierarchical scale.

However, there are serious problems with this response. Firstly, it brings up the problem of marginal cases once again. The argument will have to allow for the maltreatment of disabled people or infants, if such maltreatment was to our advantage. For example, it could be convenient to limit the amount of welfare money spent on such individuals. Such a scenario is highly counter-intuitive though and is certainly not desirable.

Secondly, it is not clear that eating meat does actually contribute to our well-being or preserve our higher capacities. Certainly, if we believe the bulk of medical research on

the issue, we might conclude the opposite, that eliminating meat from our diets is actually more beneficial and leads to a healthier lifestyle.

Finally, we can imagine a scenario where we come into contact with aliens, for example, who possess capacities that we do not, and so are higher up on the scale. The argument would allow for them to treat us badly if it were in their interest to do so, simply because we are not as advanced as them. Once again, this is a highly undesirable scenario. Therefore, the argument for differential treatment based on some sort of hierarchy of species is not a good one.¹²¹

Therefore, the three responses proposed effectively show the objection of non-moral reasons to be flawed. It may not be feasible trying to encourage everyone to stop eating meat, but that does not mean it is a fruitless project. Rather, the conclusions about animal suffering should be given more weight than the non-moral reasons against giving up eating meat. In fact, these reasons do not override the argument at all, and we ought to therefore try to encourage everyone to become vegetarian in order to help prevent animal suffering as best we can.

Counterconsideration (5) is, therefore, also unsuccessful. I have now eliminated both counterconsiderations from the conductive argument, leaving us with only positive reasons for our conclusion. Are there any additional counterconsiderations, not acknowledged thus far, that negatively affect the conclusion? There is one more important counterconsideration that needs to be dealt with. Because of the nature of the arguments for vegetarianism in this paper, we need to consider whether vegetarianism might actually imply veganism.

6. Veganism:

I have argued for vegetarianism by concentrating first and foremost on animals' suffering, and how this suffering should be prevented. This, however, raises the question of whether the vegetarian strategy I endorse might actually slip into a strategy of veganism.

¹²¹ Discussed by Robert Nozick in 'Moral Constraints and Animals', excerpted from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, BasicBooks, 1974.

According to those who adopt veganism for ethical reasons, the practices involved in the egg and dairy industry also involve suffering for the animals that are used. Collective vegetarianism therefore, although being a step in the right direction, is too small of a step. Vegans argue that we ought to avoid benefiting from animal exploitation altogether, and not just from the killing of animals for food. The killing aspect is merely one in the systematic exploitation of animals. This is a strong argument indeed, and, on the surface, appears sound enough to convince most that a strategy of veganism, over one of vegetarianism, will probably be the best option for preventing animal suffering. But I will cast doubt on this with three responses.

Firstly, I acknowledge that there is a problem with the suffering endured by those animals that are farmed but not killed for food, e.g. laying hens. But before resorting to the strong option of veganism, I argue that we take a milder line. That is, this problem could be combated with a drastic reformation of the farming practices. This is a page out of the demi-vegetarianism book.

Much of the suffering involved in factory farming is geared around the slaughtering aspect. For example, the confinement of animals in small stalls so that, when they are slaughtered, the meat is tender, and not tough. There are other, more routine practices that cause trauma and suffering, such as transport to the abattoir and the slaughtering process itself. But there are many other cruel practices that must be eliminated too.¹²² Perhaps this might not be feasible, and veganism might be the strategy that is best suited to prevent animal suffering, seeing as though this is our aim in the first place.

The project of changing the practices of farming animals that produce dairy or eggs is, however, not as difficult or as complicated as the one that faces demi-vegetarianism (which includes changing the practices involved in farming of animal for food too). Therefore, I argue that such a reformation of farming practices in this case is not impossible. However, if it does prove to be not feasible, there are still two further points to be made.

¹²² Engel gives a description of some of the cruel practices involved specifically in the egg and dairy industries, pp. 883-886

The second objection that I raised against vegetarianism – that it is just not feasible – shows that it is an uphill struggle trying to get people to change their diets. For many reasons, they are just unwilling to do so, even though they might believe they ought to. One could argue therefore that veganism is just too much to be asking at this point. At the present stage of development of our society's concern for animal welfare, veganism, because it is such a drastic change in one's diet and lifestyle, seems to be asking more than most people are prepared to give. To advocate veganism may actually be counterproductive.¹²³ That is, our aim to prevent animal suffering might in fact backfire if we try to endorse veganism simply because it is too demanding to gain widespread support. Vegetarianism is at least achievable, and therefore might be a more effective strategy to adopt in trying to prevent animal suffering.

Finally, I argue that veganism, more so than vegetarianism, falls prey to the first objection that was levelled against vegetarianism. Giving up consumption of *all* animal products will result in the elimination of all the animals that we routinely bring into existence. For the most part, this is because veganism will also eliminate the egg, dairy and wool industries. However, as I argued above, those involved in the movement are concerned with animal welfare, and so this consequence is not a desirable one. Vegetarianism therefore has one up on veganism in that it does still provide some uses for those animals that are currently killed for food.

The final counterconsideration – that the conclusion I am aiming for actually implies veganism – is therefore also unsuccessful. We can now illustrate the conductive argument for vegetarianism as follows:

(1) Vegetarianism is the best strategy for preventing animal suffering because (2) it fares better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the problems raised in Chapter 2, (3) it supports the two main conclusions that we have drawn in the paper thus far, and (6) it has beneficial consequences, such as minimising the cultivation of land and thus increasing the health of the environment. Moreover, (7) it has not been found to be unfeasible, and (8) it need not imply veganism.

¹²³ Singer, P. 'A Response' in *Singer and his Critics*, Dale Jamieson [Ed]. 1999. Blackwell Publishers. p. 324

It is difficult to give general guidelines for appraising conductive arguments. But that does not mean that the evaluation of the premises and their relevance to the conclusion are subjective or a matter of emotion. Rather, it is based on judgement. And, for any judgement or claim we feel uncertain about, we can always try to construct a sub-argument to support it.¹²⁴ The five reasons given all positively point to vegetarianism as a valid conclusion. Our decisions regarding the conclusion should emerge from our judgements about the strength of the reasons put forward, assessed in the light of counterconsiderations. By providing good justification for all these reasons, I argue that we should accept the conclusion.

I have shown that vegetarianism fares better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the same problems brought against the demi-vegetarian strategy in Chapter 2. I have also shown that vegetarianism follows from the two conclusions I have argued for in Chapters 1 and 2, and from our beliefs about animal suffering in general. I then considered two objections that are levelled against vegetarianism, and showed that both objections could be responded to successfully. And finally, I showed that vegetarianism is a less problematic strategy than veganism. I conclude therefore that vegetarianism is the best strategy to adopt to prevent animal suffering.

¹²⁴ Govier, p. 393-4

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I assessed various arguments from the philosophy of mind in order to establish whether we can, with any certainty, have knowledge of other minds. I argued that it is plausible to believe that others have minds, and, indeed, that animals can feel pain. However, because we cannot be certain about this, I then argued that, even in the face of this uncertainty, it is still rational to believe that animals can feel pain. Moreover, I argued that this fact is a significant one, and should indeed matter to us. Having established this conclusion, the next two chapters dealt with possible strategies to prevent, or at least minimise, the suffering of the animals in the farming industry. In Chapter 2, I discussed the advantages and disadvantages of demi-vegetarianism. As a strategy, I argued that demi-vegetarianism is flawed for three reasons. Firstly, it is not clear that the suffering in question will be reduced if everyone adopted demi-vegetarianism. Secondly, the positive economic reasons that demi-vegetarianism proposes might in fact backfire, and therefore perpetuate factory farming and animal suffering. Thirdly, and most importantly, demi-vegetarianism is forced to admit that there is nothing wrong with killing animals for food. Using an alternative argument involving the capacity of self-awareness, I argued, however, that killing animals for food is not a good enough justification, and is therefore wrong. In Chapter 3, having argued that demi-vegetarianism is unsuccessful, I turned to assessing vegetarianism as a possible strategy for helping to prevent animal suffering. I argued that vegetarianism is the best strategy to adopt to help prevent the suffering of animals for three reasons. Firstly, it fares better than demi-vegetarianism in the face of the problems raised in Chapter 2. Secondly, it supports the two main conclusions from Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, namely that it is rational to believe that animals can feel pain and killing animals for food is wrong. Thirdly, it successfully handles three new problems brought against it in Chapter 3. Therefore, I concluded that vegetarianism is the best strategy to adopt to help prevent the suffering of animals in the farming industry.

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