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Going Veg: Care of the Animals or Care of the Self?

Reflective Moral Vegetarianism

The object of this article is moral vegetarianism. More precisely, the aim is to discuss some aspects of such a practice as it is recommended by influential theories of animal ethics, and to suggest a different understanding of it. According to standard and mainstream animal ethics theories, vegetarian food habits are morally required because they prevent objectionable consequences for animals or they respect some fundamental rights possessed by animals themselves. I will stress some difficulties of accounts of vegetarianism of this kind. More specifically, I will try to highlight how they are shown to be poor in accounting for the actual moral experience of people adopting vegetarian lifestyles. Obviously, moral vegetarianism is the expression of some kind of respect for the animals, but according to the view I would like to support it is better understood not just as the sum of single morally required and obligatory acts in favour of animals. On the contrary, vegetarianism must be regarded as an activity of the moral agent to shape his or her own character. In these terms, vegetarianism must be considered a part of personal moral self-development.

Vegetarianism in its different forms is an old practice. Pythagoreans are the most famous examples of ancient vegetarians, but many kinds of vegetarianism can be found all along the history of western civilisation (beside all of its various declinations in other civilisations). Here, my aim is not to present a historical reconstruction of vegetarianism, but to develop a theoretical analysis of it. Such an examination is placed into the framework of contemporary discussions on

vegetarianism raised by philosophical animal ethics (even it aims at recovering a way of thinking this dietary lifestyle that is consonant with virtue ethics, that is, a classical understanding of morality). For the sake of the present discussion, just a historical remark is worth to be made. The different kinds of vegetarianism appearing in the course of western history often shared a common trait: they were thought to be a way to live differently from the whole of society. Vegetarianism has been often understood as a part of an “anomalous” lifestyle, and it is often found as a part of the way of living of members of radical and dissenting communities. This historical remark is relevant for the purposes of the present analysis because it helps highlight the link between vegetarianism and the activity of shaping one’s own character. Such a link will be the core of the examination of vegetarianism that will be developed here.

What I will specifically discuss here is *reflective moral vegetarianism*, even if for brevity’s sake I refer to it just as “vegetarianism”. Each of the terms composing the locution “reflective moral vegetarianism” requires a brief specification. First, for the purposes of the present discussion the term “vegetarianism” is defined in a quite broad sense. Usually, vegetarianism is used to describe the food habits of someone who bans any meat or fish from his or her diet, but allows animal derived products such as eggs, milk, or honey. By such a definition, vegetarianism is distinguished from veganism, which refuses any kind of animal derived products. Here, the term “vegetarianism” will be taken to include strict veganism, but also other types of food habits that are less demanding than veganism or conventional lacto-ovo vegetarianism. The present use of vegetarianism includes also food habits that, for example, refuse meat entirely, but allow for animal derived products and fish, or that refuse the eating of mammals, but allow the consumption of meat of other animals, such as poultry and fish. Vegetarianism is here extended to include lifestyles that not only exclude animals from food habits but can also refuse animal derived clothes (leather shoes, wool, silk, etc.). Finally, vegetarianism as it is used here can include the consumption and use of some animal derived products chosen on the ground of the way animals are bred, raised, kept, and eventually killed, allowing, for example, meat from free range cattle and excluding meat from factory farm animals. This latter was, incidentally, the kind of vegetarianism practiced by Richard Mervyn Hare, who argued in favour of it in his famous essay *Why I Am only a Demi-vegetarian*¹. In brief, vegetarianism in this broad meaning and for the present purposes is a lifestyle that entails habits about the choice of food and/or clothes excluding entirely or to a certain degree food and clothes derived from animals. In this broad meaning, vegetarianism describes a wide and variegated ensemble of habits. Including in the concept of vegetarianism also the consumption of

¹ R.M. HARE: *Why I Am only a Demi-Vegetarian*. In: *Essays on Bioethics*. Oxford 1993, pp. 219–235.

some meat and fish can sound bizarre, but the reason for adopting such a broad meaning will be made clearer later on. For the moment it is enough to say that this definition allows us to catch the different ways in which actual people shape their food habits on the ground, first, of reflections about the ethics of human/animal relationships and, second, of reflections about how they personally stand with respect to these relationships.

In fact, the vegetarianism I will discuss is *reflective* and this is the second feature that must be clarified. Vegetarianism is reflective since it is the outcome of a personal reflection of the agent. Vegetarianism is a lifestyle that is actively and consciously chosen by the individual. It is not simply a habit received, for example, through culture or education and uncritically practiced by the individual. Of course, a vegetarian lifestyle can be received by someone as a part of one's juvenile education by one's parents, but to meet the present definition such a lifestyle must be somehow reviewed and critically endorsed by the individual in the course of his or her life. Reflective vegetarianism requires a personal and critical commitment. The reflective nature of the practice means that it must be subjected to some kind of evaluation, that the agent weighs the reasons and motives in its favour and feels somehow compelled to adopt it. The very nature of this compulsion could be the topic of an articulated and in-depth analysis, but for my present purposes it can be said that it must not be necessarily understood as a form of "obligation" (in the sense, for example, in which Kantian ethics spells out moral duties). For example, someone can feel compelled to adopt a certain behaviour because, after critical reflection, he or she feels that it is more attuned with some fundamental traits of his or her character rather than because that behaviour meets the demands of some universal moral principles.

The third element regards the *moral* nature of vegetarianism. The reflective activity underlying the vegetarian lifestyle is of a moral nature. To meet my definition, vegetarianism must – at least in part – spring from moral reflection and be practiced for moral motives. This does not exclude the possibility that moral motives for adopting a vegetarian lifestyle could be joined to other reasons (health, taste, or, for example, the desire to share food habits with one's partner). Nonetheless, moral considerations ought somehow to prevail. Therefore, vegetarian lifestyles predominantly motivated by reasons other than moral ones are not taken into account in my present analysis. To make this point clearer, another remark should be added. To be included in my definition, vegetarianism ought to rely, at least in part, on specific moral reasons. Among these reasons, the consideration of the suffering and life of animals involved in the production of food and/or clothes must be present. These considerations can be mixed, for example, with a moral concern for the environmental outcomes of factory farming, but moral concern for the environment should not be the only reason for vegetarianism. According to my definition, vegetarian lifestyles spring out of a reflection

about the ethics of human/animal relationships and the moral meaning for the individual of his or her habits involving the lives of animals. The ethics of human/animal relationships is at the core of reflective moral vegetarianism.

Animal Ethics Theories and Vegetarianism

The most influential contemporary philosophical arguments in favour of vegetarianism are those made by Peter Singer and Tom Regan in their books *Animal Liberation* and *The Case for Animal Rights*, and in some of their essays². Their importance is due not only to the influence that their arguments have had on the general public and in the academic debate on the topic of food choices and animal moral status. It is due also to the fact that their arguments (and the debate between the two authors) is paradigmatic of what I call “standard” and “mainstream” animal ethics. With this definition, I label a peculiar and predominant philosophical approach to the ethical issues of human/animal relationships. This approach is characterised by a top-down method: particular prescriptions and obligations are derived and deduced from abstract and general principles. This is a normative approach to ethics (and it is common and widespread not only in animal ethics, but in the whole of the fields of applied ethics) and it can be seriously criticised, despite its great historical importance in shaping the public and academic debates on many topics (the ethics of human/animal relationships included). The top-down normative treatment of vegetarianism, excellently exemplified by Singer and Regan, is similarly flawed by the “defects” that can be found in the top-down normative approach in general³. My analysis will be an effort to give a richer treatment of the topic of vegetarianism and through my analysis to sketch the premises of a different approach to the whole issue of animal ethics.

On the basis of Singer’s utilitarianism, abstinence from animal derived products is morally required. If food (or clothing) is obtained by means of the suffering and death of animals, and the benefits obtained from its ingestion by

² See: P. SINGER: *Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals*. New York 1975; T. REGAN: *The Case for Animal Rights*. Berkeley, CA, 1983; T. REGAN: Utilitarianism, Vegetarianism, and Animal Rights. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. IX, no. 4, 1980, pp. 305–324; P. SINGER: Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. IX, no. 4, 1980, pp. 325–337.

³ See, for example: A. BAIER: *Doing Without Moral Theory?* In: *Postures of the Mind: Essays on Mind and Morals*. Minneapolis 1985, pp. 228–245; C. DIAMOND: *Moral Differences and Distances: Some Questions*. In: *Commonality and Particularity in Ethics*. Eds. L. ALANEN, S. HEINÄMAA, T. WALLGREN. New York 1997, pp. 197–223.

humans do not surpass the amount of suffering incurred, then such food ought not be consumed. According to Singer's utilitarianism, the consequences of eating meat and animal derived products are the reasons for the moral obligation to practice vegetarianism. Animal-based food ought to be banned since it entails morally blameworthy effects, raising the total amount of suffering in the world. As long as non-animal food alternatives are available, the benefits obtained by humans through the eating of meat consist just in the pleasures of taste. According to Singer, these pleasures are "trivial" and cannot outweigh animal suffering. The way Singer (along with philosophers like him) dismisses the importance of animal based food is representative of the oversimplification entailed by top-down normative approaches. Surely, pleasures derived by eating animal products are enormously inferior to the suffering of animals involved in their production; nonetheless, the meaning and role of animal derived food in human life cannot be reduced to the specific pleasures experienced by single humans eating it. Later on I will be more specific on this. For the moment it is enough to take note of this point.

Another controversial point of Singer's argument for vegetarianism is raised by its strict consequentialist nature. Vegetarianism is obligatory since it prevents suffering and the killing of animals. Nonetheless, in a complex society like ours we can never be sure that our abstinence from animal food saves specific animals from suffering and killing. Our individual actions could not make any difference; that is, they could not actually change the total number of animals involved. Singer is aware of this objection and stresses the importance of considering our actions as always being linked to those of others and he mentions also the value of our choices as an example for other people. Nonetheless, if we could be absolutely sure that our abstinence from meat would not change in any way the consequences for animal suffering and death, then eating that meat would be morally neutral and permissible. Even if perfectly consistent with Singer's general theoretical framework, there is something odd in this conclusion. There is something that is not captured by Singer's theoretical framework. Even if my refusal to eat meat does not prevent in any way some specific animal from suffering and being killed, it can still be *important* for me. A consistent utilitarian could regard such feeling of importance without actual consequences as a form of superstition, since only actions with measurable outcomes are morally important. Nonetheless, the subjective *importance* of vegetarianism also in similar cases cannot be dismissed in the way Singer does it. My treatment of vegetarianism and its connection with the notions of self-development and care of the self will be an effort to suggest a richer and more articulated view of vegetarianism and its moral meaning.

Tom Regan's theory avoids the abovementioned difficulties of Singer's approach, but at the price of doubtful and demanding metaethical commitments about the nature of "inherent value" and of moral rights. Beside the metaethi-

cal issues that I have no room to tackle here, Regan's approach shows problems similar to those of Singer's theory. Suppose a friend invites me to go with him to a dinner that I was not supposed to attend. The expected guests were nine and so the host cooked ten steaks (nine for the guests, one for himself). When I sit at the table, the host cuts about a tenth of his steak and gives it to me, and asks each of the other guests to do the same in order to let me have a meal like all the others. Can I be held responsible for the violation of the rights of the animal whose flesh has been transformed into steaks for my host? Here I cannot proceed to an analysis of the slippery notion of responsibility that would be entailed by the effort of arguing that also in this case I would have breached the rights of the animal. On the contrary, I would simply remark that in a case like that described above, it would be much more likely to refuse the pieces of others' steaks claiming that eating meat is not part of my own lifestyle and that it is not essential to have been directly involved in the causal process of the production of meat to refuse to eat it. It is more likely, for example, that the refusal to eat that meat would be defended by claiming that food obtained through animal suffering is something that we do not regard as something good *for us*, whoever might be ultimately responsible for the suffering involved. Food obtained at the price of animal suffering does not correspond to one's own identity and views. In this terms, being vegetarian is not the outcome of a moral obligation (as in Singer's and Regan's cases), but a form of self-expression and respect for one's own identity and views.

Humans and Food

The top-down normative approach to vegetarianism is problematic in other respects. In a nutshell, Singer's and Regan's theories underestimate the importance and complexity of meat-eating habits in the human form of life. They also underestimate the richness of actual human moral reflections about such habits and of the behaviours generated from those reflections. According to them, moral thinking and reasoning ought to reveal to us the triviality of meat eating with respect to the suffering of animals involved in their production. Of course, if the pleasures of taste experienced when eating a steak are isolated and directly compared to the suffering experienced by an animal during its miserable life and death on a factory farm, those pleasures can only appear to us as trivial. Nonetheless, such kind of isolation is inadequate, since it leads to an underestimation of the meaning and role that eating animal-based products have in the human form of life. Condemning such eating habits by defining them just as trivial pleasures completely fails to grasp those meanings and roles. An ethical

analysis of vegetarianism should seriously address both the biological and cultural dimensions of meat-eating. The use of animals for food is not contingent and accidental, but it is a structural part of the human form of life as we know and inhabit it.

The domestication of animals and their use for food has played a crucial role in the biological and cultural evolution of *Homo sapiens*. According to a convincing hypothesis, the cognitive capacities required to domesticate and keep animals have been the basis of human capacity for mind-reading, which is the essential mental faculty for life in large social groups, which in turn is the core of the development of human civilisation⁴. Furthermore, life in large social groups and the switch to the stationary life made possible by domestication and breeding has brought about a tremendous acceleration in the development and transmission of culture⁵. Animal breeding and use is not the only factor that opened the path of human civilisation, but it is among the most important ones. Therefore, the practice of eating animal-based products is deeply embedded in “human nature” and in the human form of life. It has been a propeller of human civilisation. Of course, this fact is not a justification for eating meat in our present condition of life, but it must be taken into account when discussing the moral basis of vegetarian choices. Furthermore, this fact contradicts any discourse about the presumed “naturalness” of vegetarianism. It is common among vegetarians to justify the vegetarian choice by making an appeal to the presumed “naturalness” of vegetarianism. Yet, omnivorous habits are not morally questionable because of their presumed unnaturalness. Beside the fact that in general any appeal to the concept of “nature” in ethics is flawed and questionable⁶, this particular use is defective for other reasons. If we use a stipulative notion of “nature” and define it as that which is common and usual for human beings or that which is consistent with human biological nature, then we must simply recognise that omnivorous alimentation is perfectly “natural”.

To reconstruct the place that animal-based eating has in the human form of life, it is useful also to recognise the multiple cultural roles that it plays in human life. To discard certain eating habits by saying that after all “it is just food” would be a gross mistake. Food has many meanings in human life: it is part of our social and emotional lives. We acquire food habits through education, and they become part of our identity (a point that is brilliantly made clear by Jonathan Safran Foer in his insightful book *Eating Animals*⁷). Particular recipes, their

⁴ P. SHIPMAN: *The Animal Connection. A New Perspective on What Makes Us Human*. New York 2011.

⁵ J. DIAMOND: *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York 1997.

⁶ For classical arguments, see: J.S. MILL: “Nature” in *Three Essays on Religion* (1874). In: *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume X – Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society*. Toronto 1985.

⁷ J. SAFRAN FOER: *Eating Animals*. Boston, MA, 2009.

taste and smell, can be placed deep in our memories. They can be part of our familial and local traditions. It is not wrong to say that there are foods that belong to us in a deep sense, in the same sense in which some places, dialects, and kinds of music belong to us and shape our characters and personalities. Most of such things that shape us are not directly chosen by us ourselves, but are simply received through habit and education. We are somehow passive with respect to them. We are often unaware of the fact that many of our habits have such deep roots in our social, familial, and personal history. Being conscious of such roots is a first step in the process of shaping one's own identity and character. Going vegetarian can be a transformation of this kind.

Vegetarianism and Personal Moral Life

My view is that a rich and theoretically fruitful understanding of vegetarianism should start from these last remarks. Vegetarianism is a transformation of oneself by means of taking into one's own hands one's habits and practices and eventually changing them. Describing vegetarianism in this way does not reduce the moral importance of vegetarianism with respect to mainstream normative ethical arguments. On the contrary, it tries to grasp that moral importance in all its different aspects. The aspect that is valorised by this different view of vegetarianism is a particular aspect of moral life that is underevaluated in contemporary philosophical ethics, but that was crucial in the philosophical treatment of ethics in ancient times. This aspect has been critically analysed in depth by authors like Michel Foucault and Pierre Hadot, who traced its presence in classical philosophy, calling it the "care of the self". In the third volume of his *History of Sexuality*, titled precisely *The Care of the Self*, Foucault examines how the concept and practice of the care of the self shaped sexual habits. A quote from this book can be enlightening and helpful for understanding what kind of human experience must be called "care of the self":

It is in Epictetus no doubt that one finds the highest philosophical development of this theme. Man is defined in the Discourses as the being who was destined to care for himself. This is where the basic difference between him and other creatures resides. The animals find "ready prepared" that which they need in order to live, for nature has so arranged things that animals are at our disposal without their having to look after themselves, and without our having to look after them. Man, on the other hand, must attend to himself: not, however, as a consequence of some defect that would put him in a situation of need and make him in this respect inferior to the animals, but because the god [Zeus]

deemed it right that he be able to make free use of himself; and it was for this purpose that he endowed him with reason. The latter is not to be understood as a substitute for natural faculties that might be lacking; on the contrary it is the faculty that enables one to use, at the right time and in the right way, the other faculties. In fact, it is this absolutely singular faculty that is capable of making use of itself, for it is capable of “contemplating both itself and everything else”. By crowning with this reasoning faculty all that is already given to us by nature, Zeus gave us the possibility and the duty to take care of ourselves. It is insofar as he is free and reasonable that man is the natural being that has been committed to the care of himself. The god did not fashion us out of marble, like Phidias his Athena, who forever extends the hand on which Victory came to rest immobile with wings outspread. Zeus “not only made you, but entrusted and committed you to yourself alone”. The care of the self, for Epictetus, is a privilege-duty, a gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence⁸.

The practice of the care of the self is a typical human experience, but it is not necessary in order to live. It is necessary in order to live *well*. It is the search for the good life that motivates the care of the self. This practice is not purely intellectual. It starts from reflection and thinking, but its aim is the transformation of daily life and habits. Caring for oneself poses a demand to critically consider one's own life and to introduce changes in order to achieve self-development. Vegetarianism can be regarded as a critical detachment from received food habits. This detachment is driven by a critical moral reflection about our relationships with animals and the role we want to have with the non-human world. Therefore, it can be regarded as consistent with the idea of care of the self. As a matter of fact, in antiquity food was an important part in many declinations of the practice of the care of the self.

In spelling out the general idea of vegetarianism as a form of care of the self, the idea must be more precisely articulated. The expression “care of the self” can be potentially misleading and give the impression that moral consideration of animals does not play a role in this interpretation of the practice of vegetarianism. Also in this case vegetarianism springs from a reflection about the importance of the suffering and life of animals. Nonetheless, this reflection takes a path that is different from that of more conventional theories of animal ethics. Centring vegetarianism on the transformation of the agent's practices and habits avoids the language of moral status, obligations, and rights that is characteristic of top-down normative ethical theories. In this respect, this alternative view of vegetarianism speaks a language that is similar to that of virtue ethics. Vegetarianism can be intended as a practice consistent with a virtuous character, that is, a character refraining from cruelty and sympathetic towards suffering of all

⁸ M. FOUCAULT: *The Care of the Self. The History of Sexuality. Vol. III*. New York 1988, p. 47.

sentient beings. Rosalind Hursthouse's treatment of vegetarianism in terms of virtue ethics is exemplary:

Can I, in all honesty, deny the ongoing existence of this suffering? [the suffering of animals used for food] No, I can't. I know perfectly well that although there have been some improvements in the regulation of factory farming, what is going on is still terrible. Can I think it is anything but callous to shrug this off and say it doesn't matter? No, I can't. Can I deny that the practices are cruel? No, I can't. Then what am I doing being party to them? It won't do for me to say that I am not actually engaging in the cruelty myself. There is a large gap between not being cruel and being truly compassionate, and the virtue of compassion is what I am supposed to be acquiring and exercising. I can no more think of myself as compassionate while I am party to such cruelty than I could think of myself as just if, scrupulously avoiding owning slaves, I still enjoyed the fruits of slave labor⁹.

"It won't do for me to say that I am not actually engaging in the cruelty myself": if I take care of myself, I cannot indulge in practices, like eating meat from factory farming, that depend on such an amount of cruelty. Rather than being the accomplishment of a duty towards animals (as in Singer's and Regan's theories), vegetarianism is above all a form of responsibility towards myself. Going vegetarian requires a preliminary reflection about human/animal relationships and then about the meaning of food habits that – as we have already said – are usually received and not knowingly chosen. Someone who decides to become a vegetarian needs to become aware of his or her own food habits and must change them. This change is not just a transformation of one's own opinions about the moral status of animals; it is a transformation of one's own daily life and habits, which is a form of self-development. This change in practices can be very demanding, at least at the beginning. Seeing animals as an unacceptable source of food does not immediately entail a disgust for meat or other animal based foods (in many cases such a disgust never appears and some vegetarian people maintain a strong appetite for meat or other animal based foods). Therefore, vegetarianism requires self-education and discipline (and discipline is a crucial feature of the idea of care of the self as we receive it from ancient thinkers). Going vegetarian requires changes also in familial and social relations (any vegetarian knows what I am talking about). In brief, vegetarianism is a transformation of one's own identity, as long as our identity is also defined by our daily habits and relations. As has been said, it is a change requiring discipline, and therefore various kinds of vegetarianism (veganism, lacto-ovo, and so on) can be seen not

⁹ R. HURSTHOUSE: *Applying Virtue Ethics to Our Treatment of the Other Animals*. In: *The Practice of Virtue. Classic and Contemporary Readings in Virtue Ethics*. Ed. J. WELCHMAN. Indianapolis 2006, pp. 141–142.

just as the outcome of different views about what kind of food it is acceptable to obtain from animals, but also the outcome of different ways in which vegetarian people transform and develop themselves.

Vegetarianism intended as a form of care of the self, character-development, and self-transformation allows for a pluralism that is unavailable to normative ethical theories. If vegetarianism is an obligation deduced from a general normative theory, then there is just one morally correct vegetarian behaviour, and exceptions to such behaviour must be justified case by case only for very special reasons. All moral agents must be vegetarians in the same way to fulfil the moral obligation that is deduced from a normative theory and that is identical for all rational moral agents. On the contrary, if vegetarianism is regarded as a process of individual self-care and personal transformation, it must be recognised that it can take different forms. As was said at the beginning, there is a wide range of behaviours that can be labelled *reflective moral vegetarianism*. Of course, affirming this kind of pluralism raises the question of moral relativism. Are all these declinations of vegetarianism equally correct from the moral point of view? This is a topic that I cannot face here. For my present purposes, I can only reply to the objection of moral relativism that in general our relationships with animals are nowadays undergoing a process of change and transformations. This process of transformation and moral reform is ongoing and open. In this present situation we must recognise different ways for people of being aware of such change and of being part of it. This is true not just for the topic of vegetarianism, but for all the instances of human/animal relationships. Their future depends on how human beings will transform their own identities and characters after reflection about the moral importance of animals' lives and suffering. Nowadays, the boundary that must be recognised as most crucial is not that between a presumed absolutely morally right way of respecting animals and other moral treatments of animals that are regarded as inadequate. The significant distinction is between people who deny that human/animal relationships fall into the domain of ethics and people who, on the contrary, recognise that our relationships with animals are morally meaningful and accordingly shape – individually and creatively – their own lives and their daily habits.

Abstrakt

Przechodząc na wegetarianizm:
z troski o zwierzęta czy z troski o samego siebie?

Teorie etyki zwierzęcej głównego nurtu, reprezentowane np. przez Singera i Regana, opowiadają się za zachowaniami żywieniowymi wykluczającymi spożywanie jakichkolwiek produktów pochodzenia zwierzęcego. Zgodnie z takimi ujęciami tematu, w naszych społeczeństwach i w obecnych warunkach życia, rezygnacja z żywności pochodzenia zwierzęcego jest obowiązkiem w świetle wymogów normatywnych teorii etyki. W niniejszym artykule zaprezentuję inne spojrzenie na problem releksyjnego wegetarianizmu moralnego (definiowanego w bardzo szerokim znaczeniu). Przechodząc

od niektórych bardzo krytycznych sformułowań do argumentów reprezentowanych przez główny nurt, zaproponuję stwierdzenie, że bardziej celowym jest rozpatrywać wegetarianizm jako element samorozwoju i troski o samego siebie uprawianych przez ludzi będących uczciwymi czynnymi podmiotami moralnymi. Wegetarianizm, który jest owocem osobistych refleksji na temat moralności relacji między ludźmi i innymi istotami, powinien być rozpatrywany w taki sposób, w którym czynne podmioty moralne kształtują i kultywują swój własny charakter. Taki sposób ujmowania wegetarianizmu pozwala uniknąć trudności argumentów głównego nurtu i pozwala trafniej ujmować bogactwo i różnorodność rzeczywistych wyborów ludzi w kwestii wegetarianizmu w sferze zwyczajowych doświadczeń natury moralnej.

Słowa kluczowe:

etyka wobec zwierząt, wegetarianizm, teoria moralna, etyka cnót, troska o samego siebie

Абстракт

Переход на вегетарианство:
забота о животных или забота о самом себе?

Теории этики отношения к животным основного направления, представляемые, в частности, Сингером и Риганом, высказываются за питание, исключаящее употребление каких-либо продуктов животного происхождения. Согласно такому подходу к теме в нашем обществе и в современных условиях жизни отказ от продуктов животного происхождения является обязанностью в свете нормативных требований теории этики. В настоящей статье показывается другой взгляд на проблему рефлексивного морального вегетарианства (понимаемого в самом широком значении). Переходя от некоторых весьма критических формулировок к аргументам, используемым в основном направлении, автор предлагает трактовать вегетарианство как элемент саморазвития и заботы, которыми занимаются люди, являющиеся активными моральными субъектами. Вегетарианство как эффект личностной рефлексии на тему нравственности отношений между людьми и другими существами должно рассматриваться сквозь призму активных моральных субъектов, формирующих и развивающих свой собственный характер. Такое понимание вегетарианства дает возможность избежать сложностей аргументов основного направления и позволяет точнее представить богатство и разнообразие реальных выборов людей в области вегетарианства в аспекте повседневного нравственного опыта.

Ключевые слова:

этика отношения к животным, вегетарианство, моральная теория, этика добродетелей, самозабота