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Carlo Alvaro

CUNY New York City College of Technology

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Is Animal Suffering Really All That Matters? The Move from Suffering to Vegetarianism

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Abstract

The animal liberation movement, among other goals, seeks an end to the use of animals for food. Philosophers who write against animal exploitation agree on the goal but differ in their approaches: Deontologists argue that rearing animals for food infringes animals' inherent right to life. Utilitarians claim that discontinuing the use of animals for food will result in the maximization of utility. Virtue-oriented theorists argue that using animals for food is an unvirtuous practice. Despite their different approaches, arguments for vegetarianism or veganism have a common step. They move from the notion of suffering to the conclusion of vegetarianism or veganism. In this paper I suggest that the notion of animal suffering is not necessary in order to condemn the practices of animal farming. I propose the possibility of defending vegetarianism or veganism on the basis of arguments that do not rest on the notion of animal suffering, but rather rely on aesthetic principles, the avoidance of violence, and preservation of the environment.

Keywords: Animal suffering; Vegetarianism; Veganism; Aesthetic; Gustatory; Non-violence

Animal Suffering Is Not All that Matters

I. Introduction

The modern animal liberation movement is fueled by the work of Richard Ryder (1974, 1989, 2010, 2003), Peter Singer (1975), Tom Regan (1983), James Rachels (1990) and many others. These philosophers have proposed arguments in favor of vegetarianism or veganism on the basis of utilitarian, deontological, or natural rights principles, or some combination of these theories. For example, Ryder (1999) relies on the principle of “Painism,” combines the utilitarianism of Singer with the rights theory of Regan. As Francione (1996) writes, “Painism, a doctrine developed by Richard Ryder, purports to combine rights- and utility-type considerations by combining ‘Singer’s emphasis upon pain with Regan’s concern for the individual.” (p. 224) These arguments are well known to anyone who has even the slightest interest in animal ethics, and so it will not be necessary to spend time rehearsing them here.

Furthermore, there are philosophers (for example Alvaro, 2019) writing about animal ethics who take a different approach from that of consequential and deontological ethics. These philosophers argue that the correct way to approach the question of our responsibility toward animals is to frame the issue in terms of whether the practice of rearing animals for food are virtuous and unvirtuous. Rather than arguing that animals have inherent rights or that they should be factored in a utilitarian calculus, we are better off realizing that raising animals for food, quite apart from rights and utility, is unvirtuous: e.g., callous, intemperate, self-indulgent, and base.

Although each of the theories sketched above proposes its unique approach to animal ethics, all of them have a common linchpin, which is the notion of animal suffering.

Utilitarianism, painism, subject-of-a-life, and virtue-based theories all share in common a move from the notion of suffering to the conclusion of vegetarianism or veganism. In what follows, I would like to suggest that there are other promising avenues to explore, besides the notion of animal suffering, that may lead to the same conclusions, i.e., that we should condemn animal farming and that we should become vegans or vegetarians. I do not intend to undermine the importance of animal suffering as a criterion for respecting animals. I believe that animals *do* suffer. However, an interesting question that this paper explores is, “If we discovered that animals do not suffer at all, would there be other arguments against animal exploitation?” I argue that there are other important resources that can be used to condemn the practice of intensive animal agriculture. These resources are what I term aesthetic- and gustatory-based. I shall discuss them in order.

II. Aesthetic-based argument

The aesthetic-based argument is twofold: the first aspect has to do with the unaesthetic nature of intensive animal agriculture. The second aspect pertains the unaesthetic nature of the violence involved in intensive animal agriculture. The first part of the argument can be expressed as follows:

1. We ought to eliminate those practices that produce unnecessarily repugnant sights, sounds, and odors.
2. Intensive animal farming causes unnecessarily repugnant sights, sounds, and odors.
3. Consequently, we ought to eliminate intensive animal farming.

The animal ethics literature has not completely ignored aesthetic concerns as promising ways to counter intensive animal agriculture. However, aesthetic principles are often overlooked. There

are important philosophical arguments that can support an aesthetic-based argument against animal agriculture. Consider for example Mary Midgley's notion of the "Yuk Factor." Midgley writes, "it is especially unfortunate that people often now have the impression that while feeling is against them, reason quite simply favors the new developments." (Midgley, 2000, p. 7) Here Midgley is discussing the emotional reaction of people to certain forms of biotechnology. She points out that in moral reflection, it is usual to favor reason and discount emotion. But it is a mistake to dismiss emotion forthright. The emotion-vs.-reason dichotomy is not exactly accurate. After all, emotions often are pre-rational, but not irrational, reasons. When a practice is universally, or nearly so, repugnant, we should not dismiss our emotional reaction and treat it as morally unimportant. The "yuck factor" is the not-yet-articulated moral reaction toward certain practices that must be seriously considered, because it requires time to rise to the rational level and be articulated. As Midgley points out,

Feelings always incorporate thoughts—often ones that are not yet fully articulated—and reasons are always found in response to particular sorts of feelings. On both sides, we need to look for the hidden partners. We have to articulate the thoughts that underlie emotional objections and also note the emotional element in contentions that may claim to be purely rational. The best way to do this is often to start by taking the intrinsic objections more seriously. If we look below the surface of what seems to be mere feeling we may find thoughts that show how the two aspects are connected. (Midgley, 2000, p. 8)

Regarding the treatment of animals, the nearly uniform aversion that people experience to blood, bodily fluid, bad odor, and other “yucky” aspects characteristic of animal rearing and meat production, is not merely subjective. This aversion denotes important moral implications. Even many meat eaters show repugnance toward the processes involved in meat production, from the squalid rearing aspect of animals to their slaughtering. Not surprisingly, slaughterhouses are hidden from plain sight. And also not surprisingly, meat eaters typically avoid acknowledging from where their meat comes. (Kunst and Hohle, 2016) Meat eaters consume cooked and seasoned, rather than raw, animal flesh. As Kuhen (2004) notes, people like their vegetables to look like vegetables, but do not like their meat to look like animals. The simple explanation is that the process of rearing animals, slaughterhouses, and the final products, the animal parts that people consume, are inherently repugnant.

A. G. Holdier’s (2016) proposes a version of an aesthetic-based objection to meat. Holdier presents an interesting argument inspired by the writings of Henry Stephens Salt. Writing about the immorality of slaughterhouses in the late 1800s, Salt is a pioneer of animal rights and vegetarianism. As Holdier points out, Salt’s arguments are not formal, though represent the beginning of a promising aesthetic-based argument: “Slaughterhouses are disgusting, therefore they should not be promoted.” (Holdier, 2016, p. 631) Holdier seeks to build an argument upon Salt’s aesthetic considerations regarding slaughterhouses. Two important steps in Holdier’s argument are, first, the fact that the conditions in factory farms and slaughterhouses are objectively dreadful. It is not necessary to present an argument to show that animal farming are disgusting. Nowadays, the horror of slaughterhouses and animal suffering in general are very well documented. There exist numerous YouTube video exposés as well as articles and books describing and show the horrific conditions of animal farms and

slaughterhouses. The second step is to suggest a moral dimension to aesthetic judgments to shows that the repugnant often signals that something is immoral or bad for us. (Holdier, 2016, p. 633) The connection with morality and aesthetics is, obviously, not unusual. Holdier proposes such a connection in the light of recent work in the psychology of disgust, which suggests that our reaction to the ugly is a warning that something is dangerous or wrong for us. (Chapman and Anderson, 2014) Consequently, it is plausible to assume that our repugnance toward the conditions of farm animals and the ghastly processes involved in the production of meat stems from an internal cognitive mechanism that recognizes the wrongness of such practices: “an internal preventive measure relative to the potential danger of disease and bodily harm.” (2016, p. 638)

Furthermore, consider that there are certain mechanisms used to subvert our opposition to animal exploitation. (Luke, 1992) For example, early on in our lives we have to be conditioned to regard animals as food. As children, animal food is presented in forms that do not remotely resemble animals, such as mush or nuggets or meals labeled “happy.” As Josephine Donovan (2006) correctly notes, “Children have to be educated out of the early sympathy they feel for animals.” (p. 323) Children are kept uninformed of the process required to turn animals into their “happy meals.” Children’s books often depict animals as happy friends, rather than showing them amassed in cages inside factory farms. Virtually all children are not taught that burgers and steaks are body parts of the same cute and loving animals about which children see in their books. There is a clear mechanism that disconnects children’s understanding of the lives of animals. As Carol J. Adams notes,

We live in a culture that has institutionalized the oppression of animals on at least two levels: in formal structures such as slaughterhouses, meat markets, zoos, laboratories, and circuses, and through our language. That we refer to meat eating rather than to corpse eating is a central example of how our language transmits the dominant culture's approval of this activity. (Adams, 2015, p. 47)

An aesthetic-based argument, therefore, considers the aesthetic value loss that the practices required to produce meat causes. The point of the argument is that a life that contains a lesser amount of unpleasant sights sounds and odors is more conducive to flourishing than a life filled with unaesthetic sights and violent events. The world has many terrible features, such as natural diseases, crime, pollution, discrimination, and more. Fortunately the world still has many positive and beautiful characteristics. For example, when we contemplate nature, unless one is completely insensitive about it or unmoved by it, we find objective beauty. Animals and insects represent one of the many beautiful aspects of nature. They are unique and render nature beautiful just like the elements that constitute a great painting. Imagine how sad the world would be without the colors and sounds of animals. It would be comparable to the painting Mona Lisa without the Mona Lisa. Granted, the meat industry does not intend to wipe out animals from the world. However, my point is that the meat industry affects negatively the beauty of nature damaging it and adding violent and unpleasant features in the world. Consider for example how cutting down trees to build a gas station, oil spills in the ocean, pollution, and more, make life less enjoyable. Moreover, consider the terrible loss when some animals become extinct. Even insect extinction would have a negative impact on plants and consequently grains, vegetables, and fruit on which humans and animals rely.

Raising animals for food undermines the natural beauty of the world by domesticating and bringing into existence millions of animals for the purpose of slaughtering them and using their bodies for food. Note that this line of argument is not committing the naturalistic fallacy. The argument is not that what is natural is necessarily good. Rather, *certain* aspects of the world and certain human practices make life less enjoyable and less aesthetically pleasing. Apart from the fact that animals suffer, it is necessary to realize that the practice of raising animals for food contributes to the ugliness of the world. What is ugly about raising animals for food is the fact that millions of animals have to be brought into existence and slaughtered; it is known that this is the cause of global warming, deforestation, pollution, and other problems that affect the ecosystem. (DeLonge, 2018). Also, it is hardly necessary to give a sophisticated argument to show that slaughterhouses are aesthetically unpleasant places—inside and outside—not just for the animals but also for humans who see or know about slaughterhouses and for the humans who work in them. What happens inside slaughterhouses cannot be said to add to the beauty of the world. There is nothing beautiful about a world of trucks loaded with animals that are forced into squalid slaughterhouses where the animals enter whole and exit in pieces. There's nothing beautiful about the foul odor that slaughterhouses emanate or the waste that is produced by the slaughtering and preparation of meat. Moreover, we have to consider that regardless of slaughterhouses killing animals is not an aesthetically pleasant practice to perform or watch—even for meat eaters.

The beauty of animals to which I am referring is evident by the way that many people have companion animals. They find them lovable and cute and for many these animals fill an important gap in their hearts. As some have pointed out (Joy, 2011), it seems arbitrary that some animals are treated as companions and others as food. In fact, besides cats and dogs, also pigs,

cows, chickens, and others are lovable animals. Suppose that the overwhelming majority of scientific studies conclusively showed that animals do not feel pain. Descartes, for example, was convinced that animals were like nature's robots. He argued that animals behave and look as if they were sentient, but in reality they are merely biomechanical machines. Assume that Descartes was right. Would people no longer become attached to companion animals? Would people abandon their companion animals just because these animals lack the capacity to feel pain? Would animals not matter any longer? I think it is clear that the answer is no. We contemplate the beauty of sunsets, the northern lights, the forests, and the oceans. Their beauty enriches us despite not being sentient things. By the same token, even under the assumption that animals do not feel pain, it seems to me that it would not change the fact that they are beautiful and their beauty, company, and presence in the world gives us an objective reason to not destroy them or raise them for food. It seems to me that regardless of whether animals can suffer, the practices involved in rearing and slaughtering animals are esthetically unpleasant features of the world, which is exactly what everyone—meat eaters and vegetarians—wants to avoid or eliminate. Thus the ugliness of slaughterhouses, animal overpopulation, and the damage to the environment caused by animal agriculture could constitute grounds for opposing raising animals for food, irrespective of animals' capacity to suffer.

A possible objection is the following: It is difficult to separate out the aesthetic concern regarding meat production from all the others. Almost any process in an industrialized system is going to be pretty ugly. But if a given process didn't create a number of negative externalities, and people liked the product, then the ugliness would be a very weak reason to abandon that product for some alternative—likely not strong enough to condemn the practice of intensive animal agriculture, as I suggest. It is true that many processes may be considered ugly. I want to

offer two observations: first, there is a significant difference between the ugliness of, say, a giant metalworking factory or cleaning septic tanks and what goes on in slaughterhouses. As I have discussed above, slaughterhouses provoke disgust virtually universally, while metalworking factories do not. There are important evolutionary and psychological reasons that ground our disgust toward blood, bodily fluids, and other details involved in animal farming. However, I am not here to argue that metalworking factories or cleaning septic tanks are not ugly. Arguably they are, but some practices are more necessary and less ugly than others. And certain processes or aspects of life, such as intensive animal agriculture, can be controlled or eliminated; other processes, such as making cars or cleaning septic tanks, are not easily avoidable because are necessary aspects of our lives. Second, my aesthetic-based argument comes with a qualification, that we should condemn an ugly activity or practice whenever viable alternatives exist. Since vegetarianism and veganism are viable alternatives to intensive animal agriculture, we should condemn intensive animal agriculture.

Furthermore, intensive animal agriculture does create a number of negative externalities, that is, a negative impact on the environment. I am referring to the environmental degradation caused by the various processes employed by animal agriculture. In 2018, the number of slaughtered animals in the United States alone is frightening, over forty-eight billions (<https://animalclock.org/#section-links>). This large number means, among many other things, more water usage, more animal waste, more pollution, more deforestation, more energy consumption, the exacerbation of the already serious issue of global warming (Pimentel, 2003). In short, raising animals for food is revealing unsustainable as a practice; it contributes to the degradation of the environment. (Carus, 2010; Walsh, 2013) The point here is that, once again, animal suffering is not necessary to denounce the practice of raising animals for food. It seems

clear that moral integrity demands that we avoid raising and killing animals for food to avoid an environmental disaster. This last point, however, does not apply globally, but rather to affluent societies that use intensive animal farming.

III. Integrity

The first part of the aesthetic argument explained in the previous section shows that there is pro tanto reason to condemn intensive animal agriculture because the practices of raising and slaughtering animals are unnecessarily unaesthetic. The second aspect of the aesthetic argument relies on the notion of *Non-Violence*. Arguably one of the most daunting aspects of society is the constant prevalence of aggression and violence. The argument is the following:

1. Non-violence is a virtue in and of itself.
2. Unnecessary violence ought to be avoided or eliminated.
3. Intensive animal agriculture produces unnecessary—yet avoidable—violence.
4. Therefore, intensive animal agriculture ought to be avoided or eliminated.

Non-violence as a moral principle has been used as a peaceful way to attain political and social change by the likes of Jesus, Socrates, St. Francis of Assisi, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Lydia Maria Child, Violet Oakley, and others. (“Women Champion Peace & Justice through Nonviolence,” n.d.) What I argue here is simply that violence toward animals is recognized by many, and for obvious reasons, to be wrong because it hurts animals. However, apart from causing harm to animals, I argue that violence is inherently wrong. A similar argument was used by St. Pius V who issued a papal bull titled “De Salute Gregis Dominici” to ban bullfighting. Pius V was concerned about the danger of fighting animals; moreover, he was concerned about human souls. He understood that violence undermines human dignity. The

violence involved in the operations of the meat industry, should be condemned for the same reason.

Timothy Pachirat, (2013) was still a Ph.D. student at Yale University when he gained employment in a slaughterhouse in Omaha for the purpose of writing his dissertation. At the slaughterhouse, his jobs were liver hanger, cattle driver, and quality control. During his employment in a slaughterhouse, he wrote what would later become the book *Every Twelve Seconds*. Chapter Three is the most difficult reading of the book because it describes in details the violence he experienced while working at the slaughterhouse. Pachirat describes the fear of the cattle as they approach the time of their death. After they are killed, workers cut the animals into pieces and remove the animals' organs. Pachirat describes a slaughterhouse where thousands of animals are killed every day; here the stench of animal cadavers, the blood, the entrails, the fear of the animals are magnified compared with, say, a small farm where a farmer kills an animal to feed his family. But can killing an animal and preparing her flesh for consumption be done gently? Aside from the number of animals killed, in what sense does killing one or many differ? Some said that if slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would become vegetarian. One of the main reasons, in my view, is the useless violence of killing animals for food.

Some reader will immediately retort that killing is not always wrong. Perhaps that is the case, but my argument is that useless violence is always wrong, and we are better off without it. Killing and then slaughtering an animal for food inherently involves violence. The details of killing for food a placid creature such as a cow or a gregarious animal such as a pig will bring most sensitive people to tears and make them sick to their stomach. This is not a fallacious appeal to pity. My argument is not that killing cute and innocent creatures is immoral because they are cute and innocent. My point is that killing and slaughtering involves violence, and

violence is not moral or desirable. One may point out that there are exceptions in extreme circumstances, say, when it is necessary to save lives. I am not arguing that because violence is wrong we should never use violent means in the face of extreme danger. The point that I want to make is that most people would be consternated by the killing, death, and slaughtering of animals regardless of whether animals can feel pain. It is not (necessarily) our understanding that animals have the capacity of suffering that makes us cringe at the idea of killing and preparing an animal for consumption. It is the overt violence of using instruments such as knives, hammers, nail guns, and more to cut, pierce, smash, tear. It is the instruments used to kill, the stench of death, the horrid sight of blood and entrails that follows the death of an animal.

Granted, it is not the same for everyone. These aspects may not affect some people in the slightest. But most people would refuse to kill an animal for food because of the violent acts necessary to kill and cut up the flesh of that animal. Compare slaughtering with peeling an orange or taking some lettuce from the garden. Eating vegetables does not involve violence. After all, it seems to me that slaughterhouses do the dirty job that people would otherwise hate to do—and that's why their walls are not made of glass. Meat eaters in a sense delegate this violence to Slaughterhouses. Now regardless of whether animals can suffer like humans or in a similar way or not at all, the violence involved that I describe is an objective reason for opposing to raising and killing animals for food. Most people would feel uncomfortable performing such violent acts as killing an animal and cutting up, slicing, deboning the flesh of that animal. This is the first aspect of integrity to which I am referring.

Another way to understand the intrinsic value of nonviolence is to point out that violence generates more violence. Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant both discuss this aspect. Thomas Aquinas argued that despite their capacities that are similar to those of men, it is not a sin to kill

animals because God created them for the benefit of humans. However, in *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1480), Aquinas states that animals exist for our benefit. However, this fact does not warrant animal cruelty. In fact, cruelty to animals should be avoided. He writes, “If a man practice a pitiful affection for animals, he is all the more disposed to take pity on his fellow-men.” (Aquinas, 2016, I-II 99, 1). Immanuel Kant echoes Aquinas. In *Lecture on Ethics*, Kant states, “he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men.” (1963, p. 24) The point that Aquinas and Kant make seems to me to be plausible. As Sarah Watts (2018), writes, “Jeffrey Dahmer. Ted Bundy. David Berkowitz. Aside from killing dozens of innocent people (combined), these men—and a significant percentage of other serial killers—have something else in common: Years before turning their rage on human beings, they practiced on animals.” (<https://www.aetv.com/real-crime/first-they-tortured-animals-then-they-turned-to-humans>) Consequently, even in this case, it is possible to condemn intensive animal agriculture independently of the notion of suffering. As Aquinas points out it is plausible that exhibiting compassion toward animals, it is likely that we also exhibit compassion toward other human beings. And as Kant points out, the fact that animals feel pain is not what’s morally relevant. Rather, we should treat animals with respect because being cruel to animals makes humans become cruel to each other. Following this line of reasoning, combined with what I said earlier about the violence involved in killing and preparing animals for food, it seems to me that yet another reason to oppose the practice of using animals for food is that it numbs our sense of compassion and it raises our threshold for cruelty.

IV. Gustatory

Many philosophers arguing in favor of vegetarianism point out that food flavor should be regarded as subordinate to the life and well being of animals. (Singer, 1989, p. 7) Meat eaters (and many vegetarians, as well) remind us all the time how good meat tastes and, consequently, how hard it is to give it up. Even the very Rosalind Hursthouse (2006) arguing in defense of vegetarianism writes, “Once again, honesty compels me to admit that I do not *need* meat, I just like it. A lot.” (p. 142) However, many recognize that the taste of meat and experience of eating it are, morally speaking, less important than animal suffering. Thus they conclude that since taste is trivial in comparison with animal suffering, we ought to give up eating meat. Lately, some philosophers (Kazez, 2018, Lomasky, 2013) have argued against the notion that taste is a morally trivial aspect of the morality of eating meat. They have maintained that taste is not trivial at all, but rather an important value to a good life that may justify rearing animals for food. Eating well, they argue, is a significant value to humans, and eating meat is a significant part of eating well. Consequently, not eating meat is a significant value-loss.

I do not dispute that eating well and the role of flavor are important values to humans. However, I have three objections: First, plant-based food tastes good—even superior to meat according to many meat eaters who have become vegans. I think it is important to consider that many vegans and vegetarians, who formerly consumed meat, and thus know both worlds, prefer the taste of plant-based food. Second, the notion that not eating meat is a significant value-loss to humans is an exaggeration. Perhaps, the “not eating meat is a value-loss to humans” argument would have some force under these conditions: if taste of meat were somehow *essential* to humans in the sense that without it humans would get ill or life would be utterly unbearable; or if meat were the only food that tastes good. Clearly neither is the case. Humans can easily adjust their taste, and plant food tastes just as good or even better than meat. Furthermore, considering

the aesthetic-based argument, and given the environmental argument, it is sensible to adjust one's taste to plant-based food, which avoids and prevents health problems and environmental degradation.

Third, meat is not inherently good. Meat dishes become delicious under the chef's skillful hands. I anticipate resistance here. It may be objected that this applies to vegetarian food as well. Also, it may be pointed out that flavor is subjective. I argue that it can be shown that vegetarian food is inherently flavorful while meat is not. Fruit and greens and even grains don't require special preparation or seasoning. Mangos, bananas, watermelons, spinach, peppers, and more, are flavorful in their raw state or just by minimally cooking them. There are vegetables that when raw have little taste or cannot be eaten. For example, broccoli and eggplants are not ideal eaten raw. However, they are not repulsive and with very simple cooking methods, such as steaming, they become flavorful. On the other hand, meat is foul when raw and requires certain steps necessary to render it edible. In fact, unlike vegetables, meat is the flesh of once living animals now cut and shaped in ways that do not resemble animals. Also, meat requires maturation. Maturation means that the flesh of a slaughtered animal is aged for at least a few days, sometimes up to several weeks. This process is necessary to tenderize the tough muscle fibers. Furthermore, meat is never consumed as is. With very few exceptions, people would never kill, say, a cow or pig or chicken, carve out the flesh and consume it on the spot. Meat is always aged, marinated, seasoned, and cooked. For example, consider a popular dish typical of the Italian region of Piedmont called brasato. This dish is cattle flesh braised in red wine and spices for hours. The point is to render the meat tender and allow it to acquire the taste of the wine and the spices because it is tough and unpleasant tasting. In other words, taste is conferred upon the meat by the wine and the spices and through hours of cooking. Another dish typical of the Italian

region of Bologna is a sauce with ground beef known as ragú, not to be confused with the Italian-style American brand Ragú. This sauce is prepared by sautéing the ground meat in oil and adding to it, again, wine. The reason is to fix the foul taste of the animal flesh and make it taste interesting with the use of wine and spices and transform it into a dish. After all, meat is, like it or not, decomposing flesh. It is true that vegetables and fruits decompose, too, but in that case we avoid consumption and discard them. All meat is prepared with some kinds of powerful spices, oils, or wine, and is cooked to modify its naturally foul flavor.

With regard to taste, consider Anderson & Feldman (2016), who tested whether people's beliefs of how animals are raised can influence their experience of eating them. Samples of meat were accompanied by respective descriptions of their origins and treatment of the animals on factory farms. Some samples were said to be the product of factory farm, while others were labeled as "humane". In reality, all the meat samples were identical. Interestingly, the participants of this study experienced the samples differently: meat described "factory farmed" was perceived as looking, smelling, and tasting as less pleasant than "humane" meat. The difference was even to the degree that factory farmed meat was said to taste more salty and greasy than "humane" meat. Furthermore, the participants who were told that they were eating factory-farmed meat consumed less of the sample. According to the authors of this study, "These findings demonstrate that the experience of eating is not determined solely by physical properties of stimuli—beliefs also shape experience." (Anderson & Feldman, 2016, p. 16). My point is that meat is not consumed because it is good in itself. It is rendered good by masking or modifying its original flavor with the use of potent spices or liquids used to marinate, season, and cook the meat. Furthermore, meat is enjoyed because it is eaten socially, during holidays for example. The

taste is not consistent and not exactly pleasant, as the study just mentioned explains. Thus, my argument is that,

1. Meat is not inherently flavorful, but rather unappetizing.
2. Whatever is inherently unappetizing should not be consumed.
3. Therefore, meat should not be consumed.

I think that there is good evidence to show that the first premise is true. Also most meat eaters would, in good conscience, concede this much. The second premise needs to be unpacked, especially in light of an obvious objection: it might be objected that it is irrelevant whether a given product is good in itself. What matters is how it contributes to a dish. And most people seem to think that animal products make dishes taste better than they would without them. Firstly, premise 2 is not meant to apply universally. It applies to affluent societies where people have easy access to an abundance of nutritious plant-based food. I do not claim that it applies to a circumstance where one, say, is stranded on a desert island, compelled to eat a food that provides sustenance but is not tasty.

Secondly, the reason we should avoid food inherently unappetizing in the case of meat is to avoid self-deception. That is, since meat is not inherently tasty, as I discussed above certain steps must be taken to mask its unpleasant taste, appearance, smell, and texture by curing, seasoning, and cooking it. Taking such steps constitutes an act of self-deception. Since one should avoid deceiving oneself, it follows that one should avoid eating meat. It is not the taste of meat itself that meat eaters like, but rather the taste of the seasoning, spices, and flavors created by the cooking process. Thus, realizing these facts may constitute a reason for one to avoid eating meat. I can see that this argument may not convince many, especially meat eaters. However, the main point is that it need not convince all. As Allen W. Wood aptly puts it, “Some

philosophers seem to think that each proposition in a theory must be argued...using arguments that are supposed to persuade anyone at all, even someone with no sympathy whatever for the project in which the theory is engaged. That is a standard that no philosophical theory could ever meet.” (Wood, 2008, p. 1) In fact, I do not pretend to persuade anyone at all, but rather those sympathetic with the project of condemning factory farming and supporting vegetarianism or veganism on the basis of principles that do not rely on the notion of animal suffering. With this consideration in mind, the above argument accomplishes such a goal.

V. Conclusion

It has been argued that a common trend in animal ethics is the move from the notion of animal suffering to veganism or vegetarianism. The argument is roughly the following: those animals used for food are said to be sentient, i.e., they have the capacity to suffer. Causing unnecessary suffering is wrong. For those of us who are fortunate to live in places where plant-based food abounds, killing animals for food is unnecessary. Consequently, killing animals for food is wrong. Obviously philosophers present this argument with several intermediate steps. At any rate, the point of this paper is that animal suffering is not all that matters. If it were discovered that animals do not feel any more pain than rocks, would there be other moral considerations regarding using animals for food? I maintained that there are other arguments that can be used to condemn the practice of intensive animal agriculture and support vegetarianism or veganism. These arguments are aesthetic-, gustatory-based.

First, the practices required to rear animals and transforming them into food are aesthetically repugnant. Our natural aversion to practices that are aesthetically distasteful, such as slaughtering, carries moral implications sufficient to condemn animal agriculture. This

argument has two ramifications: one, we want to avoid unnecessary ugliness in the world, and animal agriculture brings about a great deal of unnecessary ugliness. Our natural aversion to blood, flesh, and other repugnant aspects involved in animal food production signal that something is bad for us. Its deleterious effects on human health further corroborate the badness of animal food consumption. Second, animal agriculture is inherently, and unnecessarily, violent—and it instills in us violence. Since we should value non-violence as a virtue, it follows that we should avoid those practices that are inherently, and unnecessarily, violent, such as meat production in the presence of an abundance of plant-based food. Furthermore, a valid reason to embrace veganism, aside from animal suffering, is to realize that meat is not inherently tasty. Rather, meat is rendered palatable by masking its naturally foul taste with various spices, condiments, and cooking techniques. Since eating such foods is a form of self-deception, I argue that we should avoid them.

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