

Chapter Six: How Shall We Treat Other Animals? A Case Study in Applied Amorality

Prepublication draft from *Ethics without Morals* by Joel Marks

If ever there was proof of the bankruptcy of morality, it is its application to nonhuman animals.¹ That sounds like a moral condemnation in itself, doesn't it? And originally it was for me. My personal inclination was to detest the abusers of animals. What they do is the epitome of the unconscionable because other animals are the epitome of innocence and vulnerability. But the problem does not stop there, not by a long shot. Human beings have gained absolute power over all other creatures on this planet, and with that has come a nearly total abandonment of restraint in our dealings with them. Perhaps the most notorious example of this is factory farming, wherein so-called food animals are treated as mere unfeeling objects having no basic rights even to freedom from pain and early death.² Furthermore, their numbers are literally astronomical: We kill as many animals to eat *per year* as there are stars in the Milky Way Galaxy – on the order of 100 billion.³ And the vast majority of this unprecedented (and ever-increasing) slaughter is not

¹ From here on, “animals” for short.

² There is a huge literature on this sorry subject, but one need only consult the classic contemporary source: Singer 1975.

³ The precise number is hard to peg, although conservative data are available; see, e.g., http://www.upc-online.org/slaughter/2000slaughter_stats.html. But a back-of-the-envelope calculation is enough to show that killing on average, say, ten chickens to feed each human being

only unnecessary for human nutritional and even gustatory needs, but downright counterproductive of human and ecological health.⁴

Meanwhile, the sorts of “moral justifications” that are given for these practices are laughable. We are told that animals do not experience conscious pain,⁵ that they have no interest

per annum already brings the total to 70 billion sentient beings. If fish are included in the total, then Americans alone kill and eat that many animals; see, e.g.,

<http://www.animalliberationfront.com/Practical/FactoryFarm/USDANumbers.htm>.

⁴ Regarding human nutrition and health, consider this position statement by the American Dietetic Association (2009): “... appropriately planned vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan diets, are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases” (p. 1277). Regarding the effect of animal agriculture on the environment, consider this from the **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the **United Nations**: “the livestock sector generates more greenhouse gas emissions as measured in CO₂ equivalent – 18 percent – than transport. It is also a major source of land and water degradation” (Matthews 2006).

⁵ Peter Carruthers is notorious among contemporary thinkers for espousing this view (see, e.g., Carruthers 1992), although he has hedged and revised his conclusions over time (see, e.g., Carruthers 1999). I do not mean to demean the sophistication of his argumentation; I even agree with a lot of it. But I am not alone in finding his denial of conscious experience to most and

in their own continued existence,⁶ that they lack immortal souls.⁷ I will not waste my time or yours refuting such nonsense. It is obvious that these “arguments” are purely tendentious and self-interested.⁸ Even so it could reasonably be asked in what sense have I been making a case

possibly all nonhuman animals to be absurd on its face. For a reasoned rebuttal of Carruthers on this point see Lurz 2002, sec. 3.2.

⁶ More precisely, the usual argument is that nonhuman animals lack the cognitive capacity to envision and plan their future existence in the explicit manner that human beings do. But it would be an equivocation to infer from their having no conscious interest in their future existence to their not having an interest, i.e., a stake, in their future existence. For example, presumably they have a stake in possible future pleasurable experiences that being killed would preclude. Cf. Francione 2000, 137, and Yeates 2010.

⁷ Unlike the two preceding, this claim is true; but I still maintain that the argument that contains it as a premise is laughable because the presumption is that human beings *do* have immortal souls. However, even someone who takes the religious metaphysics seriously can deny that animals’ lacking an immortal soul is a good ground for doing with them as we please; see, e.g., Linzey 2009, 25-27.

⁸ As the immediately preceding notes reveal, I recognize that this remark is intemperate, not to mention, false. While I do believe that such motives are pervasive (if often unaware), the more apt observation is that the arguments they motivate are easily refuted. In any case, the meat (or

against *morality* if I have only been refuting (or, to be frank, simply dismissing) the moral arguments *in favor of* factory farming and, more broadly, meat-eating and using animals in general? Must I not also reject any and all moral arguments *against* the use of animals?

I think that observation is correct. And to begin with let me point out that it is not only animal abusers who marshal the kinds of arguments I trotted out on their behalf but also some animal advocates. This is because many, in fact probably most people who care about animals still believe there is a difference between use and abuse. For example, isn't there a world of difference between a cow in a factory farm and a cow on a family farm? And don't we all love our pets and treat them like members of the family? Therefore animal advocates who believe that the answers are obviously "Yes" to such questions conclude that our concern should be for the welfare of animals and their humane treatment. They see this as the golden mean between, at the one extreme, simply exploiting animals and, at the other extreme, having nothing to do with them.⁹

tofu) of my argument for amorality is in the refutation of the moral arguments *against* factory farming (etc.), which follows.

⁹ The latter position is the so-called abolitionist one, according to which the breeding of domestic animals would cease and the preservation of natural habitats for wild animals become our sole commerce with the nonhuman sentient world. See, e.g., Hall 2010.

But the counterargument is that, while indeed there is a conceptual difference between use and abuse, its playing out in real-world terms is problematic at best, tenuous or elusive at middling, and a pretext for exploitation at worst. In the final analysis there is no difference between the human use of animals and the abuse of animals, or, as we may also put it paradoxically, between their human use and their inhumane use.¹⁰ The most obvious way to think about this is to consider that all of the individual instances of use are dependent on *institutions* of abuse.¹¹ For example, even the beloved and pampered pets of the typical American household represent untold violations of animal integrity and well-being in the breeding, housing, transportation, and frequent abandonment of such animals.¹²

Moral Arguments to Abolish the Use of Animals

¹⁰ Cf. Lee Hall's (2006) assertion that "It's simply not plausible that humanity can renounce our privileged position over [other animals], yet live in situations where we *could* exert our will" (p. 53).

¹¹ This is analogous to the argument that slavery should be abolished as a massive scourge even though there are no doubt instances, perhaps many, when slaves are well-treated by their masters.

¹² For example, according to the Humane Society of the United States (2009) millions of dogs and cats are euthanized by shelters in the United States every year.

But that refutation only delays the reckoning for an amoralist such as myself who still wants to advocate for animals. For what, then, of the moral arguments in favor of *abolishing* the human use of other animals? Am I not implicitly endorsing *these*? Here again, however, I answer “No” since I no longer believe that any of them works.¹³ Let us take a look at the strongest moral defenses of this *abolitionism*.¹⁴ One is based on animal welfare and the other on animal rights.

The Welfare Argument

The first is the more common. This argument recapitulates my remarks immediately above about the equivalence of use and abuse. There is such an extreme power imbalance between human and nonhuman animals in the modern and especially in the contemporary world that the human exploitation of animals is inevitable. Therefore so long as we countenance any institutions of animal use at all we will be aiding and abetting the suffering and premature deaths of countless animals. But *it is wrong* to aid and abet such suffering and death because of the moral (in this

¹³ I am talking here about the theoretical sense of “working”: Is there a sound moral argument for condemning all use of animals? But there is also a pragmatic sense of “working”: Is there a moral argument, sound or unsound, that will move people to stop using animals? There is a growing cadre of animal activists who defend a “No” answer to the second question; see, e.g., Cooney 2011 and Fetissenko 2011. I also address this issue as the chapter proceeds.

¹⁴ By coincidence “abolitionism” is a name for both the position in animal ethics I am defending in this chapter and the position on empirical morality I am defending in this book.

case, utilitarian) imperative to maximize happiness and/or minimize unhappiness in the world. Therefore we should end all use of other animals and just let them alone to live on their own terms.¹⁵

While I certainly concur with its central premise, the argument ultimately fails because its conclusion simply does not follow. This is because power imbalance is a constant of human relationships that we approve or at least tolerate as unavoidable, including with other humans. Think of parents and children. Think of teachers and students. Think of people with and without disabilities or retardation. Think of middle-aged adults and elderly adults. Think of police and civilians. Think of judges and juries and defendants. Think of prison guards and prison inmates. Think of doctors and patients. Think of natives and immigrants. And on and on. Does it follow from this that all relations among these groups and all the supporting institutions should be abolished, and all human beings live in isolation, each to fend for him- or herself? Of course not. Indeed, the very thinkers who highlight such imbalances tend to advocate a heightened interaction, not a reduced one. For example, while feminists note the pervasive oppression of women by more powerful men, they also note our fundamental interdependency in all things. This is why the feminist ethics tends to be one of caring.¹⁶ Although the sort of feminism that

¹⁵ I take this terminology – “let alone” and “on their own terms” – from Catharine MacKinnon (2004) and Lee Hall (2010), respectively (although neither author is arguing from a utilitarian position).

¹⁶ For example: “life, however valuable in itself, can only be sustained by care in relationships” (Gilligan 1982, 127).

advocates for the complete separation of the sexes can certainly be found, it is not the mainstream. Men and women may be from Mars and Venus, but we all now live on Earth. Not too many people are advancing the proposition that we “go back where we came from.”

Why, then, would the power imbalance between humans and animals be an argument for their wholesale separation? Indeed, does not the environmental movement, echoing feminism, build upon the ecological insight that there is interdependency throughout nature?¹⁷ Furthermore, the argument for abolition fails to take into account all of the human benefits that derive from our use of other animals. These must be part of the calculation if our concern really is to maximize welfare in the world. Finally, the argument ignores the glaring fact that without the human use of animals, most of those animals would not exist at all, since they are only bred for human use and most would be unable to fend for themselves without human care. So at the very least some additional premise is required to demonstrate that welfare-maximization for sentient beings on this planet could be achieved only by the universal segregation of humans from other animals. For example, the utilitarian abolitionist might argue that it would be better for domestic animals if they did not exist at all than that they exist under the conditions they do, or, more tellingly, *could*, even with further reform. But this would be a notoriously difficult proposition to prove.¹⁸

¹⁷ “When we try to pick anything out by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe” (Muir [1911] 1998, 110).

¹⁸ McMahan (2008) puts the argument for “benign carnivorousism” through its paces.

The Rights Argument

One response to the above rebuttal of the welfarist argument for abolition is to revert to a welfarist *position* on animals.¹⁹ By the latter I mean the view, introduced earlier in this chapter, that animal use can be distinguished not only in theory but also in practice from animal abuse, and so the concern of animal advocacy should be not the abolition of animal use but rather its reform, in other words, the assurance of humane treatment focused on animal welfare.²⁰ This is where the second main argument for abolition comes in, which is based on animal rights and not animal welfare. The central idea is that all animals, human and nonhuman, have inherent value and worth, and hence merit due respect. Our animal worth is attributed to a certain quality we possess in common. Typically this quality is deemed to be autonomy,²¹ which is the capacity to

¹⁹ For discussion of this distinction see Marks 2008.

²⁰ This is the mainstream position of most animal advocacy organizations, such as the Humane Society of the United States. There is also a third form of animal welfarism, which stresses it as effective strategy towards achieving abolitionist ends; Robert Garner seems to hold such a position, as portrayed (and vehemently disputed by Gary Francione) in Francione and Garner 2010.

²¹ Thus, the form of the rights claim is analogous to that of the welfare claim, since the latter also attributes a feature in common to all who merit moral consideration, typically, sentience, the capacity to experience, at a minimum, pain or suffering.

decide or determine our own destiny within the limits of our natural and social habitat.²² The second premise of the argument is that due respect of this sort means recognizing that all animals are entitled to exercise their autonomy, and the third premise is that humanity's use of other animals always involves violating that basic freedom we owe them. *Ergo*: It is always morally wrong for human beings to use other animals, regardless of welfare considerations.

The reason the argument concludes this only for other animals even though the argument is based on a feature that humans share with other animals is that human beings alone have the capacity to *consent* to being used by (fellow) humans.²³ Consent is an act of freedom or autonomy (that is, when sufficiently informed, etc.), so it is not a violation of someone's autonomy to use them if they have explicitly or implicitly consented to it, other things equal. For example, there is nothing morally wrong about using a teacher to gain instruction, or using a car mechanic to have your car repaired, or using a doctor to have your illness cured, etc. That is, in the normal run of cases. If you cheat on your exams, or fail to pay your repair bill, or lie to the doctor in order to get a prescription, then it could plausibly be argued that you have abused them because you neither sought nor obtained their consent, nor is it plausible to presume it in these

²² I myself, when still a moralist, had argued for inherent rights on a different basis, namely, the capacity to value something. See Marks 2009, ch. 5.

²³ Of course there are some conditions under which even human beings lack this power, such as in infancy or in a coma.

cases, and hence you have done something morally wrong. But animals do not have the power to say, “OK, you can eat me” or “OK, you can experiment on me” or even “OK, you can keep me locked up in your apartment all day except when you take me outside on a leash.” They may not have this power only because they do not speak our language, or we do not understand theirs. So alternatively we could say that, even granting that other animals do have such a capacity – and there are certainly pet-owners and ethologists who would vouch for that²⁴ – it is fairly obvious that they would not or *do not* consent to most of the uses we humans make of them.²⁵

Now, note in particular that autonomy is not a guarantor of welfare or happiness. This is why the rights defense of animals is fundamentally different from the welfare defense. It *is* possible to imagine a welfarist autonomy defense, according to which the best way to provide for the welfare of other animals would be to let them run their own lives in a natural habitat, since, presumably, they are well suited to do so by the grace of evolution. But this runs up against the common problem of all utilitarian arguments, as we also saw above in the attempted welfarist defense of abolition, which is that the truth (or falsity) of such an assertion is impossible to ascertain.²⁶ One could adduce relevant considerations ad infinitum and never resolve the

²⁴ Cf. Bekoff and Pierce 2009 on the morally-relevant capacities of other animals.

²⁵ For example, this acknowledgment from a *supporter* of animal experimentation: “If voluntary consent were our standard for animal research, the whole business would end – not because we cannot understand what the animals are telling us, but because we can” (Carbone 2004, 179).

²⁶ See Marks 2009, ch. 4.

question. For example, don't pets live far longer and less stressfully than their wild counterparts? Yes, but they are denied the pleasures of freedom to go when and where they will, of exercising their inborn talents to hunt or forage, of raising their own families, etc. But a rights defense does an end run around all that and says, "Consequences be damned, we must respect the autonomy of all sentient beings." One consequence (or implication) of *this* is that the rights program if implemented could lead to a world in which animals were *worse off* than they are now. This does not faze the true rights theorist.²⁷ Autonomy simply trumps welfare in the rights scheme of things. These are competing intuitions, and all of us are capable of responding to both. But if one of them has the advantage in a moral defense, as the rights view now appears to do because of its ability to bypass the insoluble problem of determining which of multiple possible states of affairs would be the optimal one, it will be preferred by the moralist.

²⁷ For example: "It's a fact of life on Earth as well as a strain on the advocate's emotions that the world's animals [that is, wild animals living freely in their natural habitats] often have short, stressful lives" (Hall 2010, 172). But therefore to a person such as Hall or myself, the prospect held out by some utilitarians of eliminating natural predators from the wild, should it turn out that by doing so we would achieve less pain in the world, seems truly bizarre. McMahan (2010), for one, ponders such a scenario. (And yet, I must admit that all that really stands in my own way of accepting such a suggestion is a *romantic* view of the natural world – a picture in my own mind that I simply find attractive.)

As persuasive as the rights argument has been to many, however, I myself no longer believe it is sound. The reason is the one that has motivated this book: There is no such thing as morality or objective value. This implies that there is no such thing as the inherent value that all animals, including ourselves, are supposed to have and that supposedly accounts for our having moral rights. You may love your kitty for her own sake and wish only her welfare and happiness and provide her with them as best you can; but this has nothing to do with the metaphysical assertion that your kitty *deserves* your good wishes and beneficence or, *a fortiori*, that you *owe* them to her. Furthermore, while neither you nor I doubt for a moment that your kitty possesses the autonomy to decide her own movements and preferences, it simply does not follow that your kitty has any *right* to exercise her autonomy or have us respect it – not even any *prima facie* right, other than, that is, whatever *legal* rights our society may be inclined to accord her as an expression of *our* autonomy.

What Is an Amoralist to Do?

Thus in brief my reasons for becoming disaffected with the morality of animal ethics. Qua moralist I am firmly in the abolitionist camp. But none of the moralist arguments is sound because, in the final analysis, morality itself is a phantasm. Therefore ... what? Have I given up on abolitionism? Am I now indifferent to the suffering and slaughter of other animals? Hell no. But then on what basis do I maintain my commitment to the cause? My first reply is: Isn't that a silly question? I am reminded of the Buddha's parable of the wounded man:

It is as if a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and kinsmen were to get a surgeon to heal him, and he were to say, I will not have

this arrow pulled out until I know by what man I was wounded, whether he is of the warrior caste, or a brahmin, or of the agricultural, or the lowest caste. Or if he were to say, I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know of what name of family the man is; or whether he is tall, or short, or of middle height; or whether he is black, or dark, or yellowish; or whether he comes from such and such a village, or town, or city; or until I know whether the bow with which I was wounded was a chapa or a kodanda, or until I know whether the bow string was of swallow-wort, or bamboo fiber, or sinew, or hemp, or of milk-sap tree, or until I know whether the shaft was from a wild or cultivated plant; or whether it was feathered from a vulture's wing or a heron's or a hawk's, or a peacock's, or whether it was wrapped round with the sinew of an ox, or of a buffalo, or of a ruru-deer, or of a monkey; or until I know whether it was an ordinary arrow, or a razor-arrow, or an iron arrow, or a calf-tooth arrow. Before knowing all this, the man would die.²⁸

The Buddha likened the wounded man's questions about the provenance of his wound, to metaphysical questions about the soul, the afterlife, and so on, which he saw as not tending toward a solution to the more pressing problem at hand. In the Buddha's case, that problem was the suffering of mankind. In my case, the problem is the human tyranny imposed on other animals. For both of us the point is to solve the problem. So even aside from the unsoundness of the arguments for abolition, my complaint is that the whole argumentative pursuit is useless or worse than useless. It is *perhaps* useful to study the moral arguments of the *opponents* of

²⁸ Smith 1965, 106.

abolition, the better to be able to refute them. But to counter with moral arguments of one's own *in support of* abolition is both futile and bad strategy: futile because no sound argument exists, and bad strategy because one will therefore be put at the same dialectic disadvantage as one's opponent of having to defend the indefensible. This is also why I used the qualification of "perhaps" in the sentence above, since even to engage opponents solely for the purpose of *refuting* them risks involving one in a fatal turnabout. Moral dialogue is a tar baby.

So suppose I, the amoralist, refrained from moral arguing and debating with people who do what I do not like, which in the present case is: use other animals. What, then, would I *do*? A range of options suggests itself, among which are the following:

Be scrupulous in my personal avoidance of animal use, but otherwise adopt a passive stance of live and let live (which in the case of other animals means, "let die," i.e., be killed and abused by people who feel differently from me).

Be scrupulous in my personal avoidance of animal use, and use rhetoric or deceptive and fallacious arguments and tactics to bring other people around to the same position.

Be scrupulous in my personal avoidance of animal use, and take up arms against the people who do use and oppress animals.

Since I am an amoralist, I see any of the above as fair game; that is, none of them would be *morally wrong* (nor, of course, morally right or even morally permissible). However, even I have grounds (so to speak) for opposing all of them: *I don't like them*. It is essential to realize that an amoralist – like anybody else – has desires regarding not only ends but also means.

Sometimes a person has a kind of desire that encompasses both.²⁹ In my own case, I have two of these, that is, desires that exert a global influence on all of my other desires. They are (1) a certain image of myself and (2) a certain ideal of the world. The self-image that I desire to embody is of a person who is, among other things, compassionate, activist, and honest. The world-ideal I desire to promote is of a world in which all people have those same qualities. The two global desires could therefore collapse into the second one, with myself as a single instance; but I keep them separate because I could be striving to mold myself even if I felt stymied by the world, or for that matter, I could continue to try to change the world even if I found my own nature to be incorrigible.

My global desires then apply to the three options listed above as follows:

To be passive regarding other persons' use of nonhuman animals would evidence an insincerity on my own part, which is incompatible with my cherished image of myself as one who really cares about the suffering of others. Of course the caring itself provides a direct incentive for being active on behalf of the other animals.

To employ rhetoric and other tactics that are intentionally fallacious, misleading, etc.. would violate my cherished self-image as a person of integrity. I also happen to feel that I am poorly equipped to engage in those tactics (if only for lack of practice!) and, more generally, that they comprise a less than optimally effective strategy (although I could be mistaken about that).

²⁹ Hall 2006 was an inspiration for this idea.

To employ or encourage violence, sabotage, intimidation, and other such tactics to further the cause of animal protection and liberation is something I am simply “constitutionally” averse to (no doubt due primarily to upbringing and circumstances; for example, I went to a Quaker school for 12 years). I also take a dim view of such tactics as incompatible with my world-ideal of straightforward and respectful dealings among all people.

Extremes of Moralistic Response

Before discussing further options, I want to contrast my amoral responses to the three options above with some moral responses. I see two extremes of possible moral reaction that, in my view, count against morality. One has to do with one’s purely personal behavior, which in all of the cases above was to refrain from using animals oneself to the greatest degree that is reasonable.³⁰ The other has to do with one’s behavior towards other human beings who continue

³⁰ It is in fact impossible to refrain completely from using other animals, which is to say in the lingo, to be a pure *vegan*. Humanity has shown an efficiency in its use of animals that could be viewed as a virtue by a moralist who did not care about them ... or was not haunted by the image of lampshades being made from the skin of concentration camp inmates (Jacobson 2010). Waste has been reduced to a minimum by finding every conceivable way to insinuate the parts of slaughtered animals into the human world (see, e.g., Mottershead 2011). Will future vegans even have to give up driving because the new fuels will contain rendered fat from slaughterhouses? (See Krauss 2007 on this development.) This sort of thing creates agonizing choices for moralistic vegans; consider, e.g., Gary Steiner (2009).

to use animals, which in the above ran from minding one's own business to coercing or even killing other people.

Weakness of Will

What I find telling in the case of personal behavior is that morality can be utterly toothless. This was brought home to me by the news that two moral philosophers (that is, philosophical ethicists who believe in morality) with whom I am acquainted both agree that it is wrong to eat animals, but they both continue to do so, pleading “weakness of will.” Weakness of will is a notion beloved of moral psychologists (that is, philosophical psychologists who study moralist attitudes and behavior) who enjoy puzzling over things, in this case, how somebody could believe something was wrong and yet still do it. But it also serves the very practical function of giving moralists a supremely easy “out” from practical responsibility, as this example shows.³¹

³¹ An even easier and far more common “out” is bad faith, in this case exemplified by those who suspect that meat-eating is morally problematic *and therefore* they just don't think about it. (I thank Mitchell Silver for telling me about his encounter with this phenomenon.) Related to this would be the Chinese philosopher Mencius's advice to King Hui of Liang: “When it comes to animals, if the Superior Man has seen them while alive, he cannot stand to watch them die. If he hears their screams, he cannot stand to eat their meat. Therefore he stays away from the kitchen” (Mencius 1A:7).

Meanwhile I myself, who do not believe in right or wrong any longer, have been so moved by what I have learned about the plight of “food animals,” since taking up animal ethics

Meanwhile, a third moral philosopher of my acquaintance, when asked about the apparent contradiction between his expressed concern about the animal plight and his carnivorous eating habits, denied suffering from either weakness of will or bad faith but elucidated his moral justification only by remarking that “It’s complicated.” To me this is a red flag. Or is it a white flag?

I must finally express my overall amazement and disappointment at the lengths of silliness to which grown (and highly educated and otherwise sophisticated and mature) men and women are capable of going – and *do* go in the vast majority of cases – to defend a trivial prerogative over what they themselves would style a moral imperative (not to mention, one of the greatest magnitude). “What, shall we stop eating at all? Maybe plants have feelings too!” – etc. ad inf. It is as if they felt they were being asked to sacrifice their first-born rather than simply to alter their eating habits (not to mention, in order to prevent untold atrocities). My personal journey of animal activism has enabled me to peer through a window into the soul of the inner child(ishness) of humanity. Cf.: “A story is told of an old priest, who, asked if he had learned anything about human beings in his many years of hearing confessions, first said ‘No’, but then, ‘Yes. There are no grown-ups’” (Foot 2001, 108).

several years ago, that I have been a dietary vegan for the past three years.³² I seek no praise for my sacrifice; nor do I wish to condemn those who eat animal products. I view my change as simply cause-and-effect: I cannot help but be a vegan, given what I know and who I am. But from the standpoint of a *moralist* who believes that eating animals is *wrong*, which of the following is the better state of affairs (and who the better person): (1) that a person is convinced that eating animals is wrong but still eats them because of weakness of will, or (2) that a person does not believe in right or wrong, but does not eat animals because he cares more about their welfare or liberty than pampering his own tastebuds?³³

Violence

³² Although veganism has come to connote abstinence from all, and not only dietary animal use, I am convinced by the argument that dietary veganism makes sense as the main strategy for animal liberation: both because it accounts for the vast majority of animal (ab)use and because the boycotting of food made from animals would inevitably exert both social and economic pressure on every other kind of use of animals.

³³ Some animal ethicists caution that the eating of animals has far greater significance in human life than mere habitual gustatory preference (see, e.g., Ciocchetti [Forthcoming]). The authors are typically making a moral case for vegetarianism and still believe that the arguments favor their position. Similarly I believe that, despite the obvious cultural significance of eating animals, other nonmoral considerations for *not* doing so would attain motivational ascendancy among those who were able to reflect on all of the relevant information.

At the other extreme from the ease of moral evasion, but equally telling, I feel, are the lengths to which morality can push a person to act. Thus, when I contemplate the range of options for dealing with other people who use animals, from letting them alone to follow their own moral compass, to forcing them to follow mine (“or die!”), I see an inexorability in morality’s moving toward the latter. It seems to me quite plausible that a moralist who reflected on the animal question with sustained seriousness would come eventually to endorse the more extreme forms of animal activism. For it is a potent combination of facts and feelings to contemplate the enormity of what human beings do to other animals. Survey the whole from, as it were, the microscopic to the telescopic: from the tiny mouse, whose sentience, emotions, and personality are readily knowable to anyone who takes the time to look, to the aforementioned astronomical figure of abuse – hundreds of billions of innocent creatures of every kind subjected to a life of confinement or other cruelty before being summarily slaughtered. To take such things to heart is enough to make an Old Testament prophet out of anyone. And if God will not rain down punishment on the perpetrators of this abomination, then it is up to the individual activist to try to stop it ...*by any means necessary*.

Speaking from my own experience as a former moralist, I would say the only way to keep a level head is to bury one’s head in the sand. If one believes in right and wrong and good and bad, then nothing imaginable could be more evil than animal agriculture, animal experimentation, hunting and trapping, the pet industry, kidnapping (or breeding) wild animals for zoos, circuses, and aquaria, and so on. To rationalize these practices morally would be an act of philosophical desperation. To face them unblinkingly, if one has a human heart, is to be

moved to cry: “Never again!” So if you know that in a building across town, male chicks by the thousands are being thrown alive and fully conscious into a meat-grinder³⁴ ... what are you going to do? It is the same, I imagine, for a person who opposes abortion as the slaughter of the innocent because she really believes that an embryo is a conscious person. I don’t believe that, but I can empathize with the person who does and therefore feels justified to do *whatever is necessary* to abort the next abortion. There is no question, however, that the nonhuman animals who are used for food and research and so forth are fully conscious beings of their kind. So how could one know this and *feel* this and then sit idly by?

Of course there are more ways of taking action than “rising up,” and nonviolent action may well be more effective as well. My point is only that, for a moralist, the question of violent action against animal users is a real one. Unless one’s moral philosophy counseled total pacifism, such that you would not approve even sending in the SEALs to “capture or kill” bin Laden, or a SWAT team to rescue your child from an armed madman, it is hard to see how you could be morally opposed *in principle* to using violence against people who were actively engaged in acts of cruelty to and killing of animals, not to mention on the massive scale one finds today. Most Americans would already want to see severe punishment meted out to the person who tortured or killed their pet or kidnapped him to be sold to a pharmaceutical laboratory. Why would it not be the moralist’s job to open pet-owners’ eyes to the comparable wrong-doing in which the pet-owners themselves are complicit if they are not vegans (and, indeed, if their pets came from a pet

³⁴ See for yourself: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ-->

[faib7to&list=PLEC1AB61BABE96E13&index=3&feature=plpp_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ--faib7to&list=PLEC1AB61BABE96E13&index=3&feature=plpp_video) (accessed April 9, 2012).

store or a breeder rather than a shelter)? and then draw them to the further conclusion that, besides reform of personal habits, extreme measures might be justified to bring that wrong-doing to a quick and total halt? This would seem especially the case in a society that is *not* set up to send in the SWAT team to rescue chicks and pigs and cows from the slaughterhouse or rats and cats and monkeys from the research lab; so it is left up to the citizens themselves. In the end one can only ask: Which is the more violent society – the one in which animal activists do whatever is necessary to bring a quick and total halt to the unnecessary slaughter of hundreds of billions of sentient beings, or the one in which that slaughter proceeds undisturbed?³⁵

But I don't believe any moral argument for violence is sound. That is mainly because I don't believe there is such a thing as morality. If I did believe in morality, I think I would be hard

³⁵ Cf.:

Animals are drowned, suffocated, and starved to death; they have their limbs severed and their organs crushed; they are burned, exposed to radiation, and used in experimental surgeries; they are shocked, raised in isolation, exposed to weapons of mass destruction, and rendered blind or paralyzed; they are given heart attacks, ulcers, paralysis, and seizures; they are forced to inhale tobacco smoke, drink alcohol, and ingest various drugs, such as heroine [*sic*] and cocaine.

And they say ARAs [animal rights activists] are violent. The bitter truth would be laughable if it were not so tragic. (Regan 2004, 235; in the article, however, Regan comes out *against* the use of violence to promote animal ethics)

put to answer some animal activists' arguments in favor of violence.³⁶ Most likely there would be the typical situation in moral debate, which is that a stalemate arises between the proponents of the opposing views, who would each have scored points against the other, but who would remain unpersuaded by the other because each also has hold of, or has been gripped by, some

³⁶ Indeed, an irony for me is to read the *Guidelines* of the Animal Liberation Front reprinted in Best and Nocella 2004, 8, and be philosophically puzzled about why they appear to limit “direct action” to action that does not harm a human being. Such a limitation does not seem to me to be consistent with the implications of some of the moral arguments presented for direct action in that same volume.

Meanwhile there are some animal advocates who attempt to provide an explicit theoretical framework of nonviolence for the animal movement; consider, e.g., Lee Hall (2006).

I should also point out that very little extreme violence – or some would say violence simpliciter – has in fact been committed by animal activists. I only mean to be discussing the emotional attitudes and argumentative logic that seem to me to be concomitant with moralist animal advocacy.

Finally, I do need to clarify that there is also a significant “middle ground” between respectful dialogue and extreme tactics like threatening, arson, and violence. I have in mind such actions as surreptitiously videotaping the conditions inside animal industries.

strong intuition; and so they will leave the dialectical forum and return to their practical business, moved as they are by their respective desires.

But as an amoralist I can tell you quite simply why I want no part of violent tactics or strategy: The requisite attitude that supports it would make my life in society untenable. Indeed I speak from experience. When in a moralist frame of mind, I do get so worked up about the *evil* of animal use that I cannot have any kind of normal intercourse with humanity at large, nor with just about any individual, no matter how close to me, since the vast majority are willing accomplices to atrocities. I begin to feel like “a stranger in a strange land.” I literally have images forming in my head of what it must have been like to be a person of normal conscience (i.e., the kind you and I have) who was living in Nazi Germany, even amongst one’s own family and friends.

And this is precisely what makes animal ethics the perfect “test case” for morality. For animal use is so widespread, and so accepted, that a person who thinks otherwise and, indeed, with a clear moral vision sees it for the evil it is (morally speaking and by my moral lights), will naturally harbor a universal hatred for its perpetrators, i.e., human beings.³⁷ In a situation such as this, one would have to be God-like or saint-like to sustain an attitude of tolerance and forgiveness on the ground that “they know not what they do.” Most of us, and certainly myself, are neither God nor saint. So our morality would likely take a severe form if we stripped away

³⁷ I picture Charlton Heston at the end of the movie, *Beneath the Planet of Apes*, who becomes so disgusted at what humanity has become that he literally destroys the whole world.

the appearance of innocuousness from people's daily habits of eating and the biomedical establishment's routine practices of research and on and on to gaze on the ugly reality beneath.³⁸

Once again I need to remind my reader that I am speaking only personally. I can readily imagine the rebuttal that even in Nazi Germany there were individuals who courageously if resignedly accepted what I myself am shying away from, namely, total *emotional* isolation from one's family and friends and society because of antagonism to the prevailing attitudes and practices, if only in secret (the better to be effective). Were these not moral heroes? My reply is twofold. First: Yes, surely there is such a thing as a moral hero. Just as there were no doubt also *Nazi* moral heroes in abundance, for example, people who killed the "non-Aryan" "human vermin" despite their natural compunction and even revulsion for the task (since the "vermin" often looked very similar to non-vermin, even the Nazis' own families, but of course appearances can be deceiving) *because they thought it was the right thing to do*. So this proves nothing about the objectivity or reality of morality. Second, I see nothing in principle that requires allegiance to morality in order to withstand popular pressure to conform. For example, would not most of us spontaneously protect our own family from the Nazis, not because "it was the right thing to do," but simply because we love our family? I think the answer is obviously "Yes." And if so, why not suppose as well that most of us are capable of a comparable concern beyond the family?

³⁸ Cf. what happens when someone takes the red pill in *The Matrix*.

So in being relieved from the isolating effects of moralism, I do not thereby automatically become a conformist. Far from it. I have actually become more isolated than ever, for now I not only oppose animal use but also oppose my former activists-in-arms who base their animal advocacy on morality! I am indeed a man without an ethical country, for even though there are a few fellow citizens of the Land of Amorality, there may not be any besides myself who live in the district of Animal Abolitionism. The saving grace, however, is that I am no longer distanced from all other people on the planet by *contempt* for them. Many of them may, and surely do find me peculiar, and some even hate me. But, as the expression goes, “that’s their problem.” As unpleasant as it certainly is to be hated (or dismissed, etc.) by others, the most corrosive kind of hatred is that which a person feels oneself toward others. I dare surmise as well that the former is often a function of the latter.

But a moralist animal advocate might still object that by ceasing to condemn animal users in my heart, I have become less effective in ending the use of animals.³⁹ To this I have two replies. First is, again, that I am speaking for myself. Thus, it could well be that I am the sort of

³⁹ A prior objection would be that I have erroneously equated (almost-)universal moral condemnation with misanthropy. Hall (2006), for example, argues that the animal advocate’s concern about nonhuman animals is at base a concern about animals, humans included, and so we would want to cultivate universal respect and compassion for human beings as well as for animals. However, recall my reply to the objection of moralizing in Chapter Five, where I argued that we must not mistake a concept for reality. My claim in the present argument is that moralist thinking about animal ethics would, *as a matter of empirical likelihood*, stoke misanthropy.

personality who, although spontaneously provoking it, finds confrontation terribly uncomfortable. So that even if confrontation were more effective in promoting the causes I care about, I would care *more* about avoiding confrontations, not to mention seeing my society disintegrate into civil war. Perhaps my preference is the knee-jerk reaction of a privileged American “child of the ’60s,” who went to a Quaker school for his basic education, “dug” peace, love, and rock-’n’-roll in college, idolized Gandhi, and certainly didn’t want to go fight in Vietnam. Similarly, while I sincerely want all animals to be free(d), I *infer* – from observing my own feelings and actions – that I have the *even stronger* desire that human beings not be harmed or murdered. I cannot “*justify*” the relative strengths of my desires, but, as above, I can at best only *explain* them. Or perhaps I *could* give arguments in favor of my preferences, but the “buck” would have to stop somewhere, and that place would be at a desire or an “intuition.” For example, no doubt one of my rock-bottom commitments is to humanity as such, so that in various situations, although by no means in all, I would favor a human being over another animal simply in virtue of the former’s species. This is known as *speciesism* in the literature of animal ethics, and critics of animal use liken it to racism and sexism in the purely human sphere.⁴⁰ I can do nothing but acknowledge the truth of this attribution,⁴¹ although I strongly suspect that there is not a single animal advocate who would not be speciesist under any circumstance.⁴²

⁴⁰ The term was coined by psychologist Richard Ryder, who recounts its history here:

<http://www.richardryder.co.uk/speciesism.html> (accessed April 9, 2012).

⁴¹ On the other hand, it could well be that the proper way to understand speciesism is as a form of moralism, for example, as the view that nonhuman species have inherently less worth than the human species simply in virtue of not being human. In that case I am not speciesist at all, and for

But secondly, I must remind the reader that what is now at issue is – to use the terminology I have introduced – the desirability of empirical morality rather than the truth of metaphysical morality. For since there is no such thing as (metaphysical) morality, the only question is whether we might still have good reason to continue the pretense or even delusion that there is. I have given my argument in the preceding chapters for a general answer of “No.”

two reasons: (1) I don't believe there is such a thing as inherent worth and (2) If I did, I would probably attribute equal inherent worth to all sentient beings in virtue of their adaptation (and hence relativized intelligence, sensitivity, etc.) to their respective ecological niches. But even in the latter case, moralists recognize preferential treatment, for example, of one's own children over other people's in certain situations, despite there being no question of other children having less inherent worth than one's own.

⁴² In Marks 2010b, 110-11, I provide an example where I think all human beings would be speciesist (in the sense of showing a preference for our own species), although I cannot rule out that there could be some people who would act in a way that I would not, by my own psychology, be able to fathom. Indeed, I cannot even predict whether I myself might eventually “come around” to the extirpation of speciesism from my soul. Meanwhile, much ink has been spilled by both Singerians and Reganites over the question of whether, if somebody must be thrown out of a lifeboat to save the rest, it should be the dog rather than any of the human occupants (or nobody). As always I believe there is no “should” about it; I am only interested in what people *would* do if fully informed and reflective.

In this chapter we are considering how this applies to animal ethics in particular. I believe that, for all we can tell at any rate, alternatives to violence would be more effective in achieving the long-range goals of animal abolitionism. I will certainly grant, however, that my purely personal disinclination to violence could be coloring my views about its objective (in)efficacy. But it is my view that the moral animosity of the animal movement – violence being only its most extreme outward (and to date mostly hypothetical) form – has backfired by shutting down the possibility of fully open dialogue among the parties to the dispute. This is a roadblock I encounter on a daily basis in my attempts to engage in *respectful* activism as an animal advocate.

It is true that “revolutionary” strategy sometimes takes that kind of result into account, seeing it as a benefit. The idea is that radicalization of the populace is furthered by pushing the powers-that-be to adopt repressive measures in a misguided effort of self-protection.⁴³ My own sense, however, is that, while that can no doubt occur in some situations, it is not likely in 21st Century America on this issue. There is too large and broad a constituency of meat-eaters here to make any kind of widespread sympathy for such tactics likely. Far more likely is what, indeed, has already happened: The violent or even “merely” *intimidating* activities of a tiny minority of

⁴³ It has also been argued that the kind of respectful activism I prefer is given a leg up precisely by being able to contrast itself to the more violent alternatives. Did animal users not fear the latter, they would not give a warm hearing to the former. On this view, then, the more extreme tactics are not intended to bring about the overthrow of animal use directly, but only indirectly by facilitating the work of the “middle.” To which I can only reply: I don’t know if that’s how things work, but thanks but no thanks.

animal activists have handed the perfect pretext to animal users and government officials to smear the entire animal movement and even legally brand it as not only violent but *terrorist*.⁴⁴

Amoral Tactics for Animal Liberation

What then are the tactics or strategy that I favor? Here are some suggestions for furthering the abolitionist agenda:

1) At the top of the list is to make sure that animal users and supporters of animal use are fully informed. And there are several key things to be informed about that are relevant to the case.

These include:

1a) What nonhuman animals are really like. People in contemporary American society already seem to appreciate that dogs and cats have minds and emotions, feelings, intelligence, can be in pain or can be happy, and so forth. What they do not seem so receptive to is that this is also the case for the animals they eat and wear and the animals who are experimented on in medical laboratories, etc. Therefore I would strive to impress upon the human population that all mammals, including rats and mice, as well as all birds, including chickens and turkeys, and probably all fish⁴⁵ are fully conscious beings,

⁴⁴ See Hadley 2009.

⁴⁵ See Braithwaite 2010.

even unto possessing individual personalities. There are of course many means of conveying this sort of information, including books,⁴⁶ television and film documentaries,⁴⁷ and first-hand acquaintance.

1b) How nonhuman animals are actually treated in our society. Until very recently the realities of factory farming and vivisection and circus life and fur hunting and trapping and so forth were kept as closely guarded as the formula for Coca Cola or, for that matter, the ingredients of soylent green.⁴⁸ Now it is possible to watch gruesome footage of all of these activities at the click of a “mouse.”⁴⁹ Even so, most people seem to be unaware ... if only because they refuse to look. That latter presents a special problem, but the first item to deal with is the simple ignorance that many people have about what is actually

⁴⁶ High on my list would be books like Marc Bekoff 2007, Karen Davis 2009, and Jonathan Balcombe 2006.

⁴⁷ It would be hard to beat Tribe of Heart’s documentary, *Peaceable Kingdom: The Journey Home*, for insight into the lives of farm animals.

⁴⁸ “What is the secret of soylent green?” as the trailer of this 1973 science-fiction movie asks. I won’t spoil it for you.

⁴⁹ For example, here is a comprehensive interactive map of where animal abuse has been videotaped: <http://www.animalvisuals.org/projects/data/investigations> (accessed April 9, 2012).

going on. I myself was entirely innocent of most of the horrors until a few short years ago, despite my being generally informed and specifically interested in animal welfare. So I now support the redoubling of efforts by animal activists to spread the word⁵⁰ (and also, of course, to acquire the information and evidence in the first place⁵¹). Here again there are books and media in abundance to help in this effort.⁵²

1c) The costs of animal use to human beings and hence the benefits to human beings of ending that use.⁵³ Salient items in this regard are environmental depredations of all kinds,

⁵⁰ A most interesting and effective organization in this regard is Vegan Outreach, which focuses almost entirely on handing out brochures to college students.

⁵¹ Large organizations like PETA have staffed departments for researching the published literature of animal farming and experimentation, and several organizations of all sizes support surreptitious documentation of animal use in industries that conceal their activities.

⁵² For example, Carbone 2004, Singer and Mason 2006, and Davis 2009.

⁵³ Fetissenko (2011) argues that this is the appeal most likely to influence people. I agree with his de-emphasis on moralist rhetoric but am far from reconciled to his equal de-emphasis on “emotional appeals” (p. 150), that is, appeals to altruism and compassion. Of course he is right to see these questions as empirical ones (p. 163). His evidence of effectiveness is mainly historical, mine phenomenological.

and health implications.⁵⁴ Most Americans are certainly unaware of the United Nations' indictment of animal agriculture as a leading cause, perhaps the leading cause of global warming.⁵⁵ (Of course global warming itself is a hard sell to Americans, but that's another albeit related story.) But that is only the tip of the (melting) ice berg.⁵⁶ Most significantly, perhaps, is that the domestication of animals for food has visited the major plagues on humanity.⁵⁷ It is also responsible for diseases that, in the popular mind, are

⁵⁴ An excellent review can be found in Engel 2000.

⁵⁵ See Matthews 2006.

⁵⁶ See Ilea 2009 for a comprehensive review of environmental damage by animal agriculture.

⁵⁷ From Diamond 2002:

The main killers of humans since the advent of agriculture have been acute, highly infectious, epidemic diseases that are confined to humans and that either kill the victim quickly or, if the victim recovers, immunize him/her for life. ... The mystery of the origins of many of these diseases has been solved by molecular biological studies of recent decades, demonstrating that they evolved from similar epidemic diseases of our herd domestic animals with which we began to come into close contact 10,000 years ago. (p. 703)

pinned on vegetables.⁵⁸ Meanwhile the health advantages of a vegetarian diet seem well established.⁵⁹ The most recent health alert due to our carnivorous habits is the growing ineffectiveness of antibiotics for combating human disease due to their extensive use on farm animals to maintain their health under the crowded conditions of their husbandry.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Katz 2011.

⁵⁹ For example:

The results of an evidence-based review showed that a vegetarian diet is associated with a lower risk of death from ischemic heart disease. Vegetarians also appear to have lower low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, and lower rates of hypertension and type 2 diabetes than nonvegetarians. Furthermore, vegetarians tend to have a lower body mass index and lower overall cancer rates. (American Dietetic Association 2009, 1266)

⁶⁰ According to the Pew Campaign on Human Health and Industrial Farming (2012):

... antibiotics often are used on industrial farms not only to treat sick animals but also to offset crowding and poor sanitation, as well as to spur animal growth. *In fact, up to 70 percent of all antibiotics sold in the U.S. are given to healthy food animals.*

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the CDC testified before Congress that there was a definitive link between the routine, non-

2) It is my belief, or faith if you will, that most people in our society would be moved by sufficient exposure to the above information to want to end the human use of other animals, at least to some degree or other.⁶¹ However, they might still be stymied by insufficient knowledge of how to go about it or unavailability of needed resources. Once again the provision of information becomes key – this time about alternatives to animal use and how to cultivate or obtain them. I see a commitment to personal veganism as central.⁶² But how does one become a vegan? It is not just a matter of not eating or otherwise using animals. Real practical knowledge and skill are required. Not to say that this is by any means daunting, only that it is something one

therapeutic uses of antibiotics in food animal production and the crisis of antibiotic resistance in humans. Moreover, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other leading medical groups all warn that the routine use of antibiotics in food animals presents a serious and growing threat to human health because it creates new strains of dangerous antibiotic-resistant bacteria. (emphasis in original and citing Mellon et al. 2001)

⁶¹ Thus, what I am proposing is a variant of Richard Brandt's (1979) notion of cognitive psychotherapy. It is a *variant* because Brandt was concerned with establishing what is objectively good whereas I mean only to assert my preferred means of establishing what to do.

⁶² In this I follow people like Gary Francione (2012) and Lee Hall (2010) (*sans* their moralism).

needs to put one's mind to.⁶³ I know from my own experience that I wanted reassurance that I could give up eating all animals and animal products, such as eggs and dairy, and still receive my required nutrients without having to have a bland diet or devote my life to becoming a master chef or having to pay a fortune or move to a major metropolitan area. Over time, from both research and hanging out with vegan friends, I received this assurance, and as a result have been a happy vegan these three years going on forever.

3) Finally it is my belief or faith that, having made the commitment to personal veganism, one will naturally seek to spread the Good Word (so to speak!). A cynic could say that misery loves company, but I think it is equally obvious that so does concern, and also joy. Once again information becomes critical to the task. One now wants to know how to inform and persuade others to follow the same path as oneself. But there is nothing at all novel about this. One has available all the same sorts of resources as anyone else who wishes to teach others and change the world, from simple modeling of the transformation in one's own life to vigorous marketing and lobbying in the public sphere. There are as many ways to go about this as there are individual people in individual circumstances. For example, it must be obvious to my reader that I am doing this very thing by writing this chapter.

But my larger project in this chapter has been to illustrate with a single case study how amorality can hold its own in any project that would be pleasing to a moralist, and perhaps even

⁶³ I have tried to demonstrate how easy it is to be(come) vegan with a Website I have created, aptly called TheEasyVegan.com.

do better than morality at achieving morality's own goals, or at least the all-things-considered goals of my reader, moralist or not. I have argued specifically that morality leaves much to be desired in the defense of nonhuman animals from human onslaught. For one thing, moral arguments are commonly enlisted in the defense of animal use by human beings – indeed, not only in its permissibility but even in its obligatoriness!⁶⁴ But even the moral arguments against the use of animals are unsustainable. In their stead I, in my capacity as an abolitionist regarding the use of either animals or morality, have offered a plan of action that is designed to appeal to the heart as well as the mind.⁶⁵ The heart of the heart is this: To the person who forthrightly (and amorally) declares, “I like my steak!” I would say, “Fine, but this only tells me that you care more about satisfying your taste buds with a familiar sensation than about the suffering and slaughter of harmless sentient beings. If this conforms to the image of yourself that you most value, and that you would like other people to retain of you, and, for that matter, that you would like your children to emulate, then I will talk to somebody else about how we treat other animals.” Naturally I would hope that remark led the meat-eater to reflect further on his dietary habits and eventually reform them.⁶⁶ But if it didn't, telling him that he was “bad” or did “wrong” certainly wouldn't do the trick.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ A recent entry in this field is Scruton 2006, 61-3.

⁶⁵ Hence I completely concur with Gary Francione (2009) that what is sought is “a revolution of the heart.”

⁶⁶ A moralist could claim that I am simply modeling a less moralistic way of inculcating moral behavior. I have dealt with this general objection to the amoralist project in Chapter Five.

⁶⁷ A case in point is Time.com food columnist Josh Ozersky, who writes (2011):

... I get the point made by animal-rights activists. Their primary arguments (that eating other animals is unnecessary, that their lives are as valuable as ours, that eating meat has catastrophic effects on our environment) are, to be honest, unanswerable. I admit that. I just don't want to stop eating meat. In fact, I want to eat even more of it than I do, if that's possible. But you won't hear me making bumper-sticker arguments like: "If God wanted us to eat lettuce, he wouldn't have given us teeth." Like my hero Tony Soprano, I understand there are certain moral realities in my life that I just have to make my peace with. And my peace rests on this side of pork chops.