

Amber Thomas

Annotated Bibliography

English 379

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Is it Moral to Eat Animals? And, How Did this Question Arise?

Bruers, Stijn. "In Defense of Eating Vegan." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, vol. 28, no. 4, Aug. 2015, pp. 705–717. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=phl&AN=PHL2306608&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Bruers writes in response to Hsiao's above article wherein he argues Hsiao's defense of meat eating is flawed and, in turn, defends eating vegan. Bruers directly refutes Hsiao's main premise that sentience does not mean a being is a part of the moral community.

However, arbitrariness arises in who or what is considered a part of the moral community when we use rational agency as the deciding factor because some humans have mental disabilities and fall asleep, so they do not always maintain rational agency. Bruers proposes we eliminate the arbitrariness and consider all beings a part of the moral community with some beings exhibiting moral agent status and others moral patient status with some in both categories. In a metaphor, Bruers claims a computer's lack of sentience and a want to perform actions means it is not subject to humans pursuing actions against its will. Similarly, dogs exhibit a conscience in how they will choose to greet their owner rather than mechanically prioritize their food. Thus, one could pursue actions like killing an animal for meat which would go against their will and be considered a morally bad action.

Hsiao, Timothy. "In Defense of Eating Meat." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, vol. 28, no. 2, Apr. 2015, pp. 277–291. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=phl&AN=PHL2239932&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Hsiao argues that eating meat is not an immoral act like so many others believe it to be. Instead, he says eating meat should not be considered in the realm of moral philosophy because animals are not a part of the moral community. Membership to the moral community implies you have moral obligations and rational agency. Although this sounds cruel, he acknowledges that animals have the ability to feel pain. However, the value of nutrition in meat allows humans, as beings a part of the moral community, to pursue morally good acts. A metaphor to this concept is that of an athlete practicing hard everyday to become a better athlete. The athlete may feel pain while practicing, but it is needed to perform a greater good. His argument's main premise states animals' sentience does not indicate they have rational agency and thus are not members of the moral community.

Miller, Ian. "Evangelicalism and the Early Vegetarian Movement in Britain c.1847-1860." *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 35, no. 2, June 2011, pp. 199–210. *EBSCOhost*, [doi:10.1111/j.1467-9809.2010.01032.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9809.2010.01032.x).

Miller contends that Evangelism played a key role in popularizing the vegetarian movement growth in the mid-19th century British culture despite vegetarianism being a more main-stream topic outside of religion. He begins by arguing the protestant, or

evangelical, movement caused people to think about their moral philosophy in relation to their social life, thus extending their ethics to their diet by avoiding meat-eating. Miller cites Anite Guerrini for claiming vegetarian ideologies emerged from three main motivations: religious, medical, and moral. Medical specifically refers to the contemporary vivisections, or medical science experiments performed on living animals, causing people to contend animal cruelty and join the vegetarian movement. Miller also referenced an article from 1850 by an anonymous writer arguing vegetarianism allows for one to live a better Christian life and another article compared meat-eating to alcohol consumption. Instead of the Puritans idea of Predestination, the central ideal of Evangelicalism was that we needed to change our lives to live more like Jesus. Thus, lifestyle changes like no longer eating meat were popularized in correlation to the increase in Evangelicalism.

Muratori, Cecilia. "Real Animals in Ideal Cities: The Place and Use of Animals in Renaissance Utopian Literature." *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, Apr. 2017, pp. 223–239. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1111/rest.12294.

Renaissance utopian literature like Thomas More's *Utopia* has an awareness of the relationship between humans and non-human animals in which animals are not represented for the sake of symbolism, but as themselves. More's *Utopia* still allows for meat-eating, but he removes its Utopians from the act of killing animals as it would jeopardize the killers' humanity, as well as placing slaughterhouses outside of the city to literally distance utopians from the immorality of slaughtering. Muratori details another utopia literary writer, Doni, who suggests abstaining from meat-eating is not only good

for the body but for the spirit as you are limiting yourself of greed and lust. Renaissance utopian literature was intended to find how humans could reach true happiness. In this context, happiness is when the mind is free from bodily pleasures. In other words, these fictional utopian societies were not created with sympathy for animals or even other humans that are deemed 'less than', so animals and sub-humans have to work behind the scenes to achieve an utopian society. In her concluding remarks, Muratori claims these Renaissance utopian literary works are still working to use animals symbolically as they continue to try to distinguish between humans and nonhuman animals but they make positive leaps in representing animals as they are.

Telfer, Elizabeth. "‘Animals Do It Too!’: The Franklin Defence of Meat-Eating." *Journal of Moral Philosophy: An International Journal of Moral, Political and Legal Philosophy*, vol. 1, no. 1, Apr. 2004, pp. 51–67. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=phl&AN=PHL2083164&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Telfer defines the Franklin Defence of Meat-Eating (named after Benjamin Franklin for his vegetarian lifestyle described in his autobiography) as the idea that if animals can eat meat, without moral contradiction, then so can humans. There are five versions of this argument, the first being that fish are eaten by larger larger fish, so it follows that we can eat fish because we are bigger than them (or at least the ones we typically eat). The second Franklin Defence states animals deserve to be eaten because they kill to eat other animals. However, this is not a particularly strong argument, according to Telfer, because it does not follow well when considering herbivores, which are most of the animals we

eat. The third Franklin argument says God created animals to eat other animals, so we should too, and the fourth defence simply claims nature is innately good. But, a rebuttal to this argument is that nature has fallen along with man, so we do not know for sure if this is truly what God intended for us. The fifth and final Franklin Defence argues that a true vegetarian would work to prevent animals from killing other animals. Kelfer responds with the idea that animals are moral patients and in order to respect their will you cannot interfere with their will.

Richardson, Elsa. "Man Is Not a Meat-Eating Animal: Vegetarians and Evolution in Late-Victorian Britain." *Victorian Review*, vol. 45 no. 1, 2019, p. 117-134. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/vcr.2019.0034.

Richardson examines the origins, influence, and interest of vegetarian diets in early 19th century Britain. Notably, *On the Origin of Species* popularization raised questions about humans' relationship with animals. Richardson claims that the Victorians were the first to make vegetarianism an organized movement with the creation of groups like the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). Growing representations of vegetarian cats as well animals living in harmony together led the popular thought that humans can evolve to be vegetarians which live harmoniously with animals. There was also significant scholarly work emphasizing the spiritual gain of abstaining from eating meat as it was argued it would restore humans' harmony with the natural world.

Richardson also examines the anatomical studies conducted in the late 19th century that concluded humans were designed to consume mainly fruit. She cites Derrida for the theory of our use of 'animals' as a blanket term to define all non-human creatures as

absurd and another form of justifying animal cruelty. She concludes by referencing Moore for highlighting humans as the only species to kill solely for the sake of killing and the result of an 'intellectual sleep'.

My Response:

After reading Hsiao's defense of meat-eating, I was completely taken aback that someone could truly believe animals should not be considered a part of the moral community. Of course, animals do not have the ability to rationally distinguish between morally good and morally bad acts. But, this just brings me to the conclusion that since we, as humans, have the ability to rationally distinguish between morally good and morally bad acts means we have a moral responsibility to be anti-animal cruelty. Following Hsiao's argument, I read Bruer's response which I found directly addressing my main concern with Hsiao's logic. Bruer proposes we accept all living beings as a part of the moral community with some of us being moral patients who are watched over by moral agents. This explanation aligns directly with my initial thoughts after reading Hsiao's defense of meat-eating, however, I must note the aspect of his argument that intrigued me. Hsiao claims we should not feel a sort of moral guilt for killing animals for meat because their deaths are justified in our eating for nutrition. I found this to be comforting as I eat meat on occasion, but I think this aspect of Hsiao's argument is still deeply flawed as he acknowledges animals feel pain but he does not suggest we treat animals with greater sympathy before their killing for our meat.