Getting to the Meat of Moral Discourse and Practice

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Abstract

Humans are in the unique position of being omnivores with a conscience as we have the biological leeway and rational ability to make a choice about meat consumption. Despite the fact that the words of Peter Singer's normative argument that we ought not eat meat have been ringing in our ears for thirty-five years, most of us continue to eat meat. The discrepancy between the advice of experts and the actions of most indicates that a normative theory may not be enough to motivate change. In response to this worry, I employ a dual methodology that utilizes traditional analytic philosophy to make a normative argument as well as an empirical study that probes into the moral psyches, rational dispositions, and implicit ethical frameworks of actual meat-eaters and vegans. The results are both philosophically interesting and pragmatically valuable. Meat-eating proves a prime place in which to situate broader ethical and metaethical issues like how moral judgment works and the relationships between motivation, reason, and action. The empirical data weave through the normative theory in a way that takes the argument a step further than Singer to enact positive change on behalf of animals.

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1. Beyond Singer, To the Streets

1.1 Calling all Carnivores

The *New York Times* is currently "Calling all Carnivores" to "Tell Us Why It's Ethical to Eat Meat" in a 600-word essay.[1] The contest is in response to the fact that there has *been* no contest between those arguing for vegetarianism/veganism and those opting for ham and eggs. It has been over thirty-five years since Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* hit the shelves, catalyzing the modern animal rights movement. Since then, many have followed his lead in arguing for the moral considerability of non-human animals and the implications for our relationships to these animals. Humans are in the unique position of being omnivores with a conscience as we have the biological leeway and rational ability to make a choice about meat consumption. The experts who have weighed in on this ethical choice are telling us (or sometimes yelling at us) not to eat animals, yet only about 3% of Americans have traded in their steak knives for tofu skewers.[2] What are we to make of this discrepancy between the advice of ethicists and the actions of almost everyone else?

My thesis will not qualify for this essay contest (and not just because I exceeded the 600-word limit). I will be offering yet another argument that we ought to treat animals far better than we actually treat animals, which involves *not* eating them. At this stage in the game, though, an argument for improved treatment of animals must take it a step further than Singer to remain philosophically interesting *and* pragmatically valuable. Of course it is important to figure out whether it is morally wrong to eat meat and why, but if Singer and I are right and most people are still eating meat, then we ought to question whether a normative argument is enough. Drawing an analogy between ethical experts and scientific experts will help to clarify this point. One of the biggest misconceptions regarding global climate change is that once the scientists agree, collective action will follow. Scientists have been more-or-less in agreement for some time now, though, and progress has been painfully slow. We certainly need scientists and ethicists to tell us what to do, but by no means does the story end there. We must take our normative theory a step further to make sense of the silent carnivores, our contradictory attitudes towards animals, and (what I will show to be) our morally abhorrent actions.

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[1] Kaminer, Ariel. "Tell Us Why It's Ethical to Eat Meat: A Contest." *The New York Times*, March 20, 2012, sec. Magazine. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/magazine/tell-us-why-its-ethical-to-eat-meat-a-contest.html.

[2] Patricia Guenther, and Helen Jensen. "Sociodemographic, Knowledge, and Attitudinal Factors Related to Meat Consumption in the United States." *Journal of the American Dietic Association* 105, no. 8 (2005): 86–99.

I have taken this step further—normative theory in hand—into the streets of Portland, Oregon to probe into the moral psyches, rational dispositions, and implicit ethical frameworks of actual meat-eaters and vegans. In the course of my empirical research, I did not hear any arguments for why it is ethical to eat meat that would convince any of the *New York Times* essay contest judges, but what I did hear was arguably even more valuable. The discrepancy between the advice of ethicists and practices of (most) people is evidence for the complexity of moral discourse. Engaging actual people outside of a philosophy classroom in a situated ethical debate yielded insights into not only the ethics of meat consumption but also into the nature of moral judgment and discourse. These insights then turn around to help explain the phenomena that I suspect sparked the *New York Times* essay contest, which are more than just the mismatch between the advice of experts and the actions of most. Meat-eating will prove a prime place in which to situate broader ethical and metaethical issues like the relationships between moral judgment, motivation, reason, and action.

Before I defend the normative claim that I later "take to the streets," I will elucidate and justify my methodology in the following section.

1.2 Taking Philosophy to the Field

When biologists, physicists, or psychologists want to discover something about the world, they put on their lab coats and head to the field to collect empirical data in order to verify or refute claims. Analytic philosophers, on the other hand, need no microscopes, rulers, or even research subjects. It is in this tradition that I have completed the theoretical portion of my thesis, from a desk in the library.

I was not inclined to leave my desk because of any deep methodological worries about analytic philosophy. Rather, I was inclined to leave my desk because it seemed like nobody was listening to desk-dwelling philosophers. I would be willing to bet that your average American cannot name five living philosophers, which has certainly not been the case for most of recorded history. Part of this is probably due to the general demise of the public intellectual, and another part of it has to do with the increasingly analytic direction of philosophy and the growing bifurcation between the sciences and humanities. Phillip Kitcher, a philosopher at Columbia who has called for the reconstruction of philosophy as a discipline in order to accommodate these worries, echoes John Dewey's century-old complaint that philosophy has become "self-indulgence for the few."[3] Ethics, in particular, is branch of philosophy for which an understanding should be a public good. We are all engaged in ethics—whether we know it or not,—but how qualified are we to make the ethical decisions that we do every day? There are philosophers who are devoting their careers to figuring this out—people working on how to

[3] Kitcher, Philip. "Philosophy Inside Out." *Metaphilosophy* 42, no. 3 (April 1, 2011): 248–260.

solve moral disagreement, whether abortion is permissible, what it means to be a good person, etc. If the people who are making ethical decisions (everyone!) are out of touch with the experts, this is bad news for morality. Normative theories do not have a chance at making an impact if they are inaccessible—that is if they are never heard, or if they cannot be understood. I designed the methodology for my thesis with the goal of forging this connection between the experts and everyone else in mind.

When I decided to "take philosophy to the field," I immediately stumbled upon some methodological challenges. The first has to do with the tension between universalizable normative claims and situated realities. Traditionally, Western philosophy has aimed to discover universalizable moral theories. The prominent journal *Analytic Philosophy* does not contain any articles with titles like "Deontology in Chicago's Inner-City Schools" or "Supervenience and the North American Free Trade Agreement." Almost always, analytic philosophy is geographically un-situated (unless you count possible worlds as situated research sites…). There is an emerging field in philosophy, though, that uses concrete empirical data to meaningfully inform philosophical claims. Experimental philosophers, as they are calling themselves, are not asking questions any different from those that philosophers have been asking throughout most of the history of philosophy. They want to understand how the mind works—how knowledge is acquired, how moral intuitions are formed, etc. Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols, in "An Experimental Philosophy Manifesto," point out that these areas of inquiry were thrust from the domain of philosophy in the 20th century as philosophy took an analytic turn towards language and logic.[4] Experimental philosophy, then, is just a modern twist on the traditional inquiries of philosophy. Situating the study of minds in the minds of actual people or the study of ethics in the ethical frameworks of ethical beings should not strike us as anything too unusual, but many philosophers have taken issue with the methodological underpinnings of experimental philosophy.

One major methodological worry is that experimental philosophy turns philosophy into a popularity contest, but to have this worry is to misunderstand the aims of experimental philosophy. Whether average people agree with the normative theory that I have come to support through rigorous philosophical argument does not speak to the truth of that normative theory. If 60% of people think it is a good theory, that does not imply that it is 60% correct or that there is a 60% chance it is true. The value of this empirical data is two-fold. First, it is interesting anthropologically to know how intuitions vary across cultures or between groups of people. The other value of experimental philosophy is slightly more nuanced. Studying peoples' intuitions can clue us into underlying factors that explain how those intuitions are formed—how the cognitive machinery that produces, say, our ethical beliefs functions.

[4] Knobe, Joshua, and Nichols, Shaun. "An Experimental Philosophy Manifesto." In *Experimental Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

The impact of experimental philosophy on conceptual claims is limited, since we cannot conduct experiments in all possible worlds. There is good reason, however, to privilege the actual world in our philosophical pursuits considering that this is the world in which we dwell. Experimental philosophers do not suggest getting rid of conceptual analysis as a mode of inquiry. They believe the two methods can work together to discover important conceptual and empirical truths.

I set out to discover how—if at all—empirical data gathered from meat-eaters and vegans can inform a normative claim about meat consumption. I cannot say that my empirical research significantly changed any of my own ethical beliefs about meat consumption that I will argue for in the following chapter, but the empirical data was both pragmatically valuable and philosophically interesting. On the pragmatic side, the empirical data's contribution was two-fold. First, particulars can still matter in universalizable moral theories. This is certainly true of the moral theory that I endorse in which value is constituted by the fulfillment of individuals' subjective desires. To learn about desires, why not go study desirers? Analytic philosophy can tell us about the ontology of desires and can identify the criteria a desire must meet to make it worthy of fulfillment, but empirical inquiry is needed to know which desires people actually have, their relative strengths, which actual desires meet the criteria that make them worth fulfilling, and the consequences of their fulfillment. Second, insofar as I will be arguing that *most people* are engaged in a morally wrong practice, it will be valuable to know where they are going wrong. This may be at the level of a mistaken belief—say, that animals cannot feel pain—or it may be a deeper issue involving the nature of moral judgments, reasoning, and motivation. These "deeper issues" are where the empirical research becomes very philosophically interesting. For example, the entire enterprise of reason-giving in moral discourse was drastically different "on the streets" than in a philosophy class, or any class for that matter. How do people make moral judgments? How do they think they make moral judgments? What sort of justification do they hold for their beliefs? Are people intrinsically motivated to act in accordance with their moral judgments? What counts as a reason to act? I did not anticipate that my empirical research would lead me to these questions nor can I promise definitive answers to any of them, but I can say that my empirical research has heavily informed and expanded the scope of my philosophical inquiry into meat consumption as well as yielded pragmatic value to the instrumental goal of improving animal welfare.

In order to understand how a normative theory is informed by empirical research, I first have to argue for a normative theory and evaluate our treatment of animals in its context. Then, I will use empirical data to re-assess the normative claim. As I mentioned, the conclusion of my normative argument—that we ought not eat animals—did not drastically change as a result of the empirical data, but it complicated this conclusion. The empirical found a number of ways to interact with normative, strengthening my argument in a way that meets the need to go beyond Singer addressed above. The structure of this thesis reflects my methodological approach in that I really did begin from a desk in the library in the tradition of analytic

philosophy before taking this argument to the streets, genuinely not knowing how or even *if* the empirical would turn around to inform the normative. I invite the reader, then, to follow this same route from the normative (the *ought*) to the empirical (the *is*) and back again.

The normative project involves establishing that animals are conscious beings with desires. Many readers will find this claim obvious, but the denial of mental lives to animals has a strong foothold in biology and philosophy, so it deserves some attention. I will argue against skeptical claims about animal minds from historical, philosophical, and ethological perspectives. The following section shows how the founding of ethology as a new discipline created a hostile environment for the study of subjective phenomena like animal emotions and desires in the 20th century. Then, I will step even farther back into intellectual history to show how the denial of mental lives to animals is a vestige of Cartesian mind/body dualism.

1.3 How Happiness became a Behavioral Syndrome

When the topic of "Animal Personality" appeared on my undergraduate Animal Behavior course's syllabus, I was happily surprised. I was happy because I took it as evidence that the mental lives of animals were finally beginning to gain some credence in mainstream (or at least small-liberal-arts-college-stream) biology. I was surprised because my biology professor had shown herself to be a materialist through and through, professing that the only difference between a thought and a reflex is number of synapses involved and that all animal behavior has a mechanistic explanation, though we might not know it yet. Anyway, I came to class prepared with an arsenal of anecdotes supplemented with a few peer-reviewed studies showing examples of animal personality, hoping I'd get a chance to chime in on what I thought would turn into a lively class debate. My professor began class with, "I always struggle with whether or not to lecture on animal personality because I HATE animal personality. I mean, come on! The word *person* is in it!" At this point I'm restraining myself from pointing out that the word person is not species-specific and a variety of cultures attribute personhood to animals… She continued, "So, for this reason, I prefer the term 'behavioral syndrome,'" at which point I had to laugh a little because this term perfectly embodies the "anthropomorphobic" attitude about animal minds shared amongst many of today's ethologists. That what Darwin termed "shyness," "happiness," and "misery" in animal personalities are now referred to as "behavioral syndromes" is a historical change worth examining.[5]

Trepidation about animal personality is only one of a suite of "anthropomorphobias" related to animal minds. In the study of animal behavior, anthropomorphism, or the attribution of human qualities to non-human animals, started out as commonplace (as in Charles Darwin's pioneering work) but turned into "that worst of ethological sins" by the second half of the 20th

[5] Darwin, Charles. *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*. London: John Murray, 1872.

century.[6] Currently, anthropomorphism is negotiating a new role in ethology. Contemporary advocates for the cautionary application of anthropomorphism insist that it can be a useful tool for understanding and explaining animal behavior, but its opponents come out of a strong, century-long tradition of reprimanding anthropomorphism.[7] I will soon make a philosophical argument for animal minds, particularly animal desires, but first, in this section, I will argue that these "anthropomorphobias" are embedded in the historical trajectory of ethology, the study of animal behavior, as an up-and-coming "hard" science in the late 20th century.

When the Nobel Prize was awarded to Tinbergen, Lorenz, and Karl von Frisch in 1973, R.A. Hinde and W.H. Thorpe of Cambridge University wrote in the British journal *Nature*:

> The award of the Nobel Prize for medicine and physiology to Karl von Frisch, Konrad Lorenz, and Niko Tinbergen marks the full emergence of the study of animal behavior from one of the less respectable corners of natural history to the forefront of the biological sciences.[8]

Their accomplishment—the creation of a brand new branch of biology—was impressive. Their pioneering work is still cited in the textbooks of students of animal behavior, and Tinbergen defined the four areas of ethology—mechanism, adaptation/function, ontogeny, and phylogeny/evolutionary history—that are still used today.[9]

Like psychology, if ethology was to gain the respect of up-and-coming hard sciences like physics and chemistry, it would have to focus on directly observable and verifiable behavior, a class into which emotions, practical reasoning, and other cognitive phenomena did not easily fit. Tinbergen took a skeptical stance on animals' subjective experiences in *The Study of Instinct* (1951). He claimed that because subjective experiences cannot be objectively observed, it is futile, and even dangerous, to draw conclusions about the *causes* of behavior based on postulations about animal minds.[10] He criticized the "subjectivist" animal psychologists, such as Bierens de Haan, of reporting causes of behavior by making "guesses' about the animal's subjective state.[11]

Konrad Lorenz was more partial to the idea of animals' subjective experiences. In his pivotal book, *King Solomon's Ring* (1952), he wrote of instances of courage, cowardice, love, jealousy, excitement, and "embittered rage" without trepidation.[12] His discussion of emotion does not seem unscientific, either, because of his emphasis on its adaptive value. For example,

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[6] Moussaieff Masson, Jeffrey and Susan McCarthy. *When Elephants Weep*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1995, xviii.
[7] Contemporary advocates include Mark Bekoff, Colin Allen, Jane Goodall, and Jaak Panskepp, among others.
[8] Quoted in Burkhardt, Richard W. *Patterns of Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 1.
[9] See, Alcock, J. 1942-1998 (6 eds.). *Animal Behavior*. Sinauer Associates, Inc.
[10] Tinbergen, Niko. *The Study of Instinct*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951, 6.
[11] Tinbergen, *The Study of Instinct*, 5.
[12] Lorenz, Konrad. *King Solomon's Ring*. London: Metheuen, 1952, 141.

in his chapter, “The Language of Animals,” Lorenz argued that because animals lack language, they are better-equipped at “’mood-convection” than we humans.[13]

That there were disagreements and debates about what counted as anthropomorphism and what objective scientific truths could be gleaned from the mental lives of animals during the early days of ethology illustrates the gradualness of the transition from Darwin’s treatment of emotion to the current treatment. Traces of behaviorism were clearly present in Tinbergen’s work, although he still made a point to distinguish ethology from American behaviorists’ overly mechanized picture of animal behavior, which made the mind obsolete.[14] Richard Burkhardt, in his comprehensive history of the founding of ethology, credits Tinbergen with doing the brunt of the work of in propelling ethology into the respected center of the biological sciences.[15] I speculate it was Tinbergen’s tough-mindedness about anthropomorphism and “subjectivism” that paved the way for ethology to be considered a hard science. Just like psychology, ethology only survived as a science by relegating subjective and confusing phenomena like emotions or desires to the back burners in the days of its infancy.

While the overturn of behaviorism, renewed interest in philosophy of mind, and the advancement of ethology could have made room for the study of subjective phenomena like animal emotions in the 1960s and 70s, quite the opposite trend ensued. Behaviorism was replaced with a revolution in cognitive science that focused on computational models of the mind, and philosophers put forth increasingly cognitive theories of emotion under which animals could not qualify as emotional beings.[16] Instead, Darwin’s insights became lost among mathematical models of emotion that were estranged from field observations and philosophical conceptions of emotions that did not allow for evolutionary continuity between animal and human emotions. It is notable, although unsurprising, that the current advocates of cautionary anthropomorphism are those who work out in the field making observations in the same way Darwin did back in the late 19th century rather than those working on mathematical models sequestered in the computer lab. A fuller look into this period after the founding of ethology and the cognitive revolution that cultivated the “anthropomorphobia” of the last forty years is beyond the scope of this section, but returning to the debate between cautionary anthropomorphism and its opponents will yield some interesting insights.

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[13] Lorenz, *King Solomon’s Ring,* 75.

[14]Tinbergen, *The Study of Instinct.*

[15] Burkhardt, *Patterns of Behavior*.

[16] A paper by Errol Bedford in 1957 and a book by Anthony Kenny in 1973 that “argued against the assumption that emotions are feelings, impervious to either will or reason” are credited with renewing philosophical interest in the emotions.[16] These theories then fueled what became the cognitive mainstream, which, instead of characterizing emotions by physiological symptoms, characterized emotions by the cognitions that accompany them. These cognitions might be beliefs, desires, or some combination these species of cognitions. The 1970s to early 2000s marked an especially cognitivist period in the recent history of the philosophy of emotion by asserting that emotions are judgments.
de Sousa, Ronald, "Emotion", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/emotion/>.

John S. Kennedy, a contemporary crusader against anthropomorphism, concedes that behaviorism, the "first major break from traditional anthropomorphism inevitably went too far."[17] In other words, while behaviorism marked an important departure from Darwin's unhesitant reference to the "embarrassment" of caterpillars and "joy" of ants, it took this view to the extreme by denying any sort of mental capacities to animals.[18] Both advocates and opponents of anthropomorphism agree that this was a shortcoming of behaviorism and acknowledge its vestigial influence over the last half a century, but their evaluations of this influence differ. While the advocates of cautionary anthropomorphism characterize the recent return of anthropomorphism in the last decade or two as *recovery* from behaviorism, the opponents consider it a "*regression*."[19] This evaluative judgment about the use of anthropomorphism is ultimately a scientific one in that anthropomorphism either is or is not a useful way of understanding animal behavior, or, more broadly, animals either have certain mental capacities or do not. I will soon give philosophical and ethological arguments that animals do have these capacities, but the point that I wish to emphasize in this section is that this scientific judgment is embedded in broader historical trajectories. The scientific landscape of the 20th century was, for the most part, a hostile environment for the study of animal minds, so as we learn about animal minds from ethological perspectives, we should consider how this scientific landscape continues to shape our views. Next, I will delve even farther back into intellectual history to Descartes' mind/body and human/animal dualisms, which will mark the beginning of my philosophical argument that we ought to treat animals far better than we actually treat animals by not eating them.

[17] Kennedy, J.S. *The New Anthropomorphism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 2.
[18] Darwin, *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals.*
[19] Kennedy, The *New Anthropomorphism,* 2.

2. The *Ought*

2.1 Descartes' Foolisms

The denial of mental lives to animals is, at least in part, a vestige of Cartesian skepticism about animal minds. Descartes believed that animals were unconscious automata—machines. Human bodies were the same, only blessed with consciousness in the separate domain of the mind. Descartes' philosophy depended on this strong bifurcation between the mind and the body, which translated into a dichotomy between human and animal. This dualism catered to our uses of animals during a time when the options were either to accept the mindedness of animals and stop abusing them or deny their mindedness, thus justifying our uses of them for experimentation and for food, in particular. At some point, it became our relationships with animals that determined our beliefs about animals rather than our beliefs about animals guiding our relationships with them. When Descartes' epistemological skepticism about minds in general and his related mind/body dualism fell out of fashion, remnants stuck to our conceptions of animals, perhaps out of convenience more than anything else. In this section, I will argue that there are compelling philosophical and ethological reasons to free animal minds from this residual Cartesian skepticism.

Descartes was onto something, though, which is that consciousness, by nature, is private. We cannot literally feel one another's pain or pleasure because those feelings are "contained" in the feeler. Yet, pretty much everyone (barring the deranged and some extreme skeptics)[20] thinks that other humans are conscious beings who share a similar mental phenomenology. Imagine how drastically different our lives would be if we did not assume that other people had emotions, thoughts, desires, etc. Someone who did not recognize this would most likely not get along very well in the world. A jury would probably be unsympathetic to the defense: "I poisoned him because I thought he was like a machine with no conscious experience." The jury would be equally sympathetic to the related epistemological defense: "I had no way of knowing whether he wanted to be poisoned because desires are private phenomena!" So, then, how *do* we know that other humans are conscious beings like us? The two best arguments at our disposal are the argument from analogy and inference to the best explanation.

The argument from analogy, in a simple form, goes as follows:

1) I am conscious.
2) You are a being like me.
3) You are conscious.

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[20] These two categories are not mutually exclusive…

This is a weak argument, but coupling it with the fact that it provides the best possible explanation as to why other beings who are like us act the way they do makes it stronger.[21] A parallel argument can be run for any given mental state, such as "having desires:"

1) I have desires.
2) You are a being like me.
3) You have desires.

Again, it is difficult to imagine how we would interact with or understand the world if other humans did not have desires. (Ex. I cannot for the life of me understand why that man is buying himself an ice cream cone! Hint: He *desires* ice cream.)

The next question is: What does it take to extend this analogy to the consciousness of animals? The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy offers an argument from analogy:[22]

1) All animals I already know to have a mind (i.e. humans) have property *x*.
2) Individuals of species *y* have property *x*.
3) Therefore, individuals of species *y* probably have a mind.

Fill in x with any property that we perceive to be indicative of consciousness, such as intentionality.[23] The first premise of this argument, of course, relies on the legitimacy of the analogy for human consciousness argument. This argument is essentially a form of the simple argument by analogy for human consciousness offered above. Adding "property x" to the analogy is a way of formalizing the "being like me" clause. So, do we have reason to think that animals are beings like us? The simple argument from analogy for human consciousness is weak, so this is even weaker since animals are more different from any given person than other people are from that person. That being said, as more and more research from the fields of cognitive ethology and neuroethology emerges, the more animals look like the sort of cognitive beings we are and the stronger the analogy becomes.

The strongest argument for animal minds comes from an *inference to the best explanation*, which claims that animal consciousness provides a better explanation of the observable

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[21] A full explanation of inference to the best explanation will follow shortly.

[22] Andrews, Kristin. "Animal Cognition." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Summer 2011., 2011. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/cognition-animal/.

[23] This version of an argument from analogy might be problematic because it is controversial as to whether the criteria for consciousness are demonstrable through behavior. In other words, how can we know that an individual of species x has intentionality? Is that testable? How do we know that computers, which can problem-solve, do not have intentional states? These issues deserve attention, but even if we cannot prove that computers do not have intentionality, one compelling reason to deny computers mental states while granting them to humans and non-human animals is that computers consist of all observable processes whereas humans and non-human animals have private mental states, which is one of the criteria for consciousness.

properties of animals, including both their behavior and physiology, than any other competing hypotheses. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy formulates it as follows:[24]

1) Individuals of species *x* engage in behaviors *y*.
2) The best scientific explanation for an individual engaging in behaviors *y* is that it has a mind.
3) Therefore, it is likely that individuals of species *x* have minds.

Because of the privacy of consciousness, these are the best arguments we have to rely on in terms of animal consciousness just as they are the best arguments we have to rely on in terms of human consciousness. If we accept the possibility that animals are operating like machines, we must also accept the possibility that humans are operating like machines. We have no choice but to infer the best explanation for an animal's observable behavior.

After establishing this philosophical starting point, we should turn to those who observe animal behavior in order gain insight into their mental lives.[25] Ethologists have certainly found some remarkable evidence for animal consciousness, but the common-sense evidence may be just as powerful. Animals avoid noxious stimuli (things that cause pain), avoid using injured body parts, and engage in behavior that we typically regard as a response to pain when in contact with noxious stimuli. Most of us have probably seen a dog limping, whimpering, or escaping from the grasp of a toddler trying to ride it like a horse. Using the argument from analogy, we get something like the following:

1) When we avoid and negatively respond to noxious stimuli, it is because we feel pain.
2) The dog is avoiding and negatively responding to noxious stimuli (displaying behaviors like us).
3) By analogy, the dog feels pain.

Couple this with an inference to the best explanation, and we have a very compelling case:

1) Dogs avoid and respond negatively to pain.
2) The best scientific explanation for (1) is that dogs feel pain.
3) Therefore, it is likely that dogs feel pain.

Put another way, the dog's actually feeling pain is a better explanation for this behavior than Descartes' competing hypothesis (that the dog is a machine).

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[24] Andrews, "Animal Cognition."

[25] I will provide further justification for this move in Chapter 5.

Another line of evidence for animal consciousness comes from an evolutionary argument. The rule of thumb in evolutionary biology is to assume that a trait, structure, or function is more-or-less conserved down the line (evolutionarily continuous), which is basically a way of saying that evolution is slow and gradual.[26] Many examples in support of this general rule are obvious. Hair consists of a cuticle, cortex, and medulla and functions to keep mice, sloths, elk, and humans warm. Hearts have a similar function, even in phylogenetically remote species such as spiders, fish, birds, and mammals. Although I will not give a full defense of the argument here, I think that mental states have similar evolutionary continuity, especially in light of their adaptive value. What are the chances that consciousness would just "pop up" with only humans? Why would we alone utilize conscious processes to make decisions that look so similar to those decisions made by other animals? It is hard to resist the conclusion that privileging humans alone with consciousness is a product of human exceptionalism rather than scientific truth. Obviously, there are important exceptions to this rule of thumb, but just as it would be ridiculous to posit that a newly discovered mammal's eyes have some function other than vision, it is also erroneous to assume that mental states (feelings of pain[27] or pleasure, desires, etc.) do not have correlates across species boundaries.

Now that strong evidence from philosophy, ethology, and evolutionary biology has freed us from the throes of Descartes' "foolisms," we are prepared to evaluate animals' statuses in the moral realm. If animals were unconscious machines, the discussion would stop here, as few people would seriously argue that thermostats or cotton gins should have moral consideration. Humans, on the opposite side of the spectrum as machines, certainly deserve moral consideration. The question to be addressed in the rest of this chapter is, then, is: *Where do animals fall on this spectrum?* First, in Section 2.2, I will argue that the satisfaction of one's desires is what makes life go well for both humans and non-human animals. Once we have established that animals have interests, the next step is to propose a moral framework for considering these interests. I will propose a consequentialist ethical framework in which the desires of animals can be weighed against the desires of humans.

2.2 A Mini Poodle Dress as the Primitive Sign of Wanting

The question of what comprises the human good is an age-old question, but in a day and age where Americans are spending $300 million on dog clothing and ten times that much on meat and hunting annually, there is a compelling reason to extend this question to animals.[28] What makes life go well for an animal? (Something tells me the answer won't be a

[26] See, for example, Watson (1914), Darwin (1959), and Maynard-Smith and Szathmary (1995).
[27] Pain, here, is defined as "conscious nocioception" rather than simply "nocioception" so that it qualifies as a mental state.
[28] Silverman, Justin R. "Do Dogs Need Coats?" *New York Post*, February 3, 2010.
http://www.nypost.com/p/entertainment/fashion/do_dogs_need_coats_auWyzQm3VYxqUsWjyhriOM.

mini poodle dress.) How much can we know about animals' subjective desires? This section seeks to answer these questions by applying the desire satisfaction theory of the human good to non-human animals.[29] The crude desire-satisfaction theory requires some modifications if it is to sufficiently explain what comprises the human good. After confronting some preliminary obstacles in extending the theory to animals, such as attributing desires to animals in the first place, I will address how animals can meet the modifications to the desire-satisfaction account of the human good. Overall, I will show that the desire-satisfaction theory of the human good can successfully be extended to non-human animals without demanding the use of cognitive capacities that exceed animals' capabilities or sacrificing the autonomy of animals.

We can be quite confident that humans have desires. We are also confident that cucumbers, on the other hand, do not. The question as to whether or not animals have desires, though, is not as clear. Gary Varner, in *In Nature's Interest*, proposes criteria for what constitutes a desire and then argues that "higher" animals like mammals almost certainly have desires, reptiles and birds occupy a middle ground, and fish most likely do not have desires.[30]

According to Varner, A desires x if and only if:

1. A is disposed to pursue x.
2. A pursues X in the way he, she, or it does because A previously engaged or concurrently engages in practical reasoning about how to achieve X or objects like X, where engaging in practical reasoning includes both drawing inferences from beliefs of the form "Y is a means to X" and the hypothesis formation and testing by which such beliefs are acquired and revised; and
3. this practical reasoning is at least potentially conscious.[31]

The first requirement addresses the goal-oriented nature of desires. G.E.M. Anscombe states this requirement straightforwardly: "The primitive sign of wanting is trying to get."[32] If a pig desires to roll around in mud, then we should expect it to roll around in mud when the

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Angier, Natalie. "The Creature Connection." *New York Times*. New York, March 14, 2011, sec. Science.

[29] There are many competing theories as to what comprises the human good, including hedonistic theories, "objective list" theories, and desire-based theories. For the purposes of this chapter, I will assume that a desire-satisfaction account is the best option although, in arguing for it, I hope its chief advantages become clear.

[30] Varner, Gary. *In Nature's Interest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

[31] Varner, *In Nature's Interests*?

[32] Anscombe, E. *Intention*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, 68.

opportunity arises. This requirement is grounded in a Humean action theory, which says that desires—rather than beliefs—dictate our behavior, or, as Hume famously wrote, "Reason is and only ought to be the slave of the passions."[33] If a dog has a belief "raccoon in tree," this is not enough to motivate her to action. The dog must also *desire* the raccoon. The same goes for humans. Believing that there is cake in front of me is not enough to motivate me to eat it. I must *desire* the cake. I will not delve into a full defense of the Humean action theory, but note that this assumption about the relationship between desire and action is important insofar as we use animal behavior (action) as evidence for animal desires.

Varner's second requirement which calls for practical reasoning is less straightforward.[34] He adds this in order to distinguish "'mere brute longings'" from true desires, which are mediated by beliefs and involve reasoning. Imagine a dog who barks every time he hears the doorbell (this probably is not hard to imagine for many dog owners). Regardless of who is behind the door, ringing the doorbell is essentially like pushing a bark button on the dog. Even after disciplining the dog, he still behaves this way. For some reason or another, this dog has the barking instinct engrained in him. His actions are bound to the stimulus of the doorbell ringing. It is possible that the dog enjoys barking for the sake of barking, but it is more likely that his barking is either a hard-wired or a conditioned but static reaction to stimulus. Therefore, we should not treat his barking as evidence for a *desire* to bark since it is not an instance of practical reasoning.

Varner proposes using Martin Bitterman's levels of probabilistic learning as evidence for practical reasoning.[35] I will not indulge a full discussion of how each type of learning provides increasing evidence for practical reasoning, but it suffices to say that some types of probabilistic learning where animals show progressive adjustment to new situations suggest that an animal is forming hypotheses and testing them rather than exercising a habit created by operant conditioning.

Finally, the third requirement, that animals must be potentially conscious in order to have desires, has mostly been addressed in the previous section with the argument from analogous behavior between humans and animals, inference to the best explanation of animal behavior, and the argument for the evolutionary continuity of consciousness. There is one more kind of evidence to add in order to strengthen the case for animal consciousness and,

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[33] Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, 685.

[34] It is worth noting that this second requirement is fairly strong. "Practical reasoning" might evoke images of old men playing chess and carefully deliberating before making each move, but even stimulus-response reactions could be thought of as low-level practical reasoning. A more complete understanding of what practical reasoning is and why it is required is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is not an essential part of attributing desires to animals. The arguments from analogy and inference to the best explanation are evidence for animal desires independent of Varner's argument here. He goes a step further in mapping the ontology of a desire and assessing how animals fare under each criterion.

[35] Varner, *In Nature's Interests?,* 31-36.

specifically, animal desires. If consciousness supervenes on neurophysiologic states, then animals who have similar neurophysiology to humans are also likely (by analogy) to be conscious.[36] This argument by physiological analogy might become even stronger when adapted from general consciousness to desires because studying patients with major injuries to the prefrontal cortex has given us insight into which parts of the brain contribute to forming desires. These "frontal patients" seem incapable of using practical reasoning to learn. Instead of forming hypotheses and testing them, they follow unalterable habitual response patterns. This strengthens the case for mammals having desires because they also have prefrontal cortexes, but what about non-mammalian animals? Varner argues that if we adopt a functionalist theory of the mind, consider potentially analogous structures in non-mammalian brains (particularly in reptiles, amphibians, and birds), *and* take into account the behavioral evidence from non-mammals, then it does seem like at least some non-mammals are capable of desires.

Now that we have established that at least some animals have desires, we are ready to assess whether the desire-satisfaction theory of the human good can successfully be applied to animals. A crude desire-satisfaction theory of the human good, which simply says that an object or state of affairs is good for an agent *if* and *because* she desires it, runs into some problems. Richard Kraut outlines three objections:[37]

I. An agent's desires can conflict with her general well-being.
II. It is objectively and undeniably bad to satisfy some desires.
III. It cannot be an agent's present desires alone that constitute well-being; an agent does not always know what is best for her.

I believe that desire-satisfaction can be modified to address Kraut's objections. This modified version would look something like the following:

An agent's life goes well to the extent that her desires are satisfied pending the following conditions:

1. Her desires are "above-all" (first-order) desires or sub-desires that are conducive to the fulfillment of her first-order desire(s).[38]
2. Her desires are rational; they are not contradictory.
3. Her desires are determined clear-headedly, wholeheartedly, and with full knowledge of the relevant facts.

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[36] This is not to imply that consciousness can be operationalized.

[37] Kraut, Richard. "Desire and the Human Good." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 68 (2) (November 1994): 39–54.

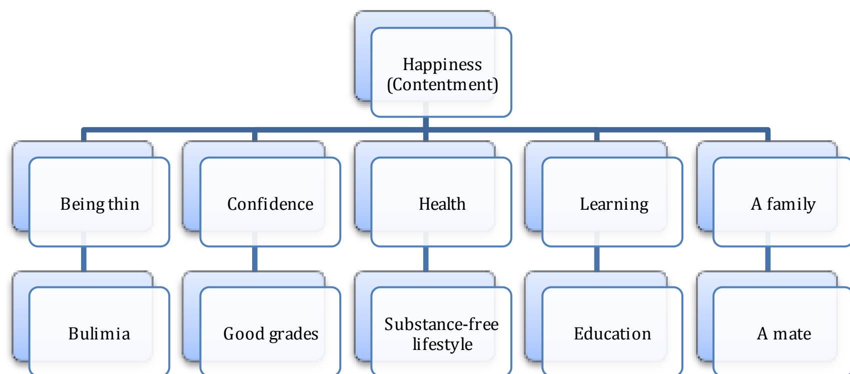
This first modification requires some explanation and justification. I will argue that our desires are hierarchical in nature, and acknowledging this (1) allows desire-satisfaction to survive Kraut's first two objections and (2) provides a foundation for weighing desires of humans and animals against one another. I will focus on (1) here, but the significance of (2) will become clear as I argue for a consequentialist weighing of desires in the following section.

I agree with Kraut that there are some desires that we should not fulfill, but we disagree as to the reason why. Kraut thinks we should not fulfill some of our desires because they are objectively bad. Take the example of the bulimic. Kraut would refute desire-satisfaction by pointing out that fulfilling her desire to be thin by becoming a bulimic is not conducive to her well-being. He takes the fact that she desires being a bulimic together with the fact that bulimia is not good for her as evidence that desire-satisfaction is flawed.

I would accept this as an objection to desire-satisfaction if being thin was her greatest, above-all desire. However, I find that implausible. Let's say that her greatest desire (which I will call a first-order desire) is to be happy or content. She rationally determines that fulfilling her desire to be thin (a second-order desire or a sub-desire) will contribute to her overall desire to be happy. Next, she determines that if she becomes a bulimic (a third-order desire), she will be thin. It seems that, because the third-order desire leads to the second-order desire which leads to the first-order desire, becoming a bulimic would contribute to her well-being. Kraut would find this implausible because he sees bulimia (or any form of self-punishment) as objectively bad, and therefore, he would find fault in desire-satisfaction.

I also find it implausible that her bulimia contributes to her well-being, but I do not think this is because bulimia is objectively bad. Rather, bulimia is bad for her because it does not lead to her well-being by failing to satisfy, and, is in fact, *contradicting* her overall desire(s). If we disregard any sub-desires that do not contribute to the satisfaction of her first-order desire(s), we can salvage desire-satisfaction.

I have created a plausible hypothetical hierarchy of her desires below. Her first-order desire (on top) takes priority over her second-order desires (in the middle row) which in turn take priority over her third-order desires (on the bottom). I am proposing that if a certain desire conflicts with a desire in a higher order, it should be disregarded.



Although bulimia does lead to being thin and being thin does lead to happiness, bulimia (a third-order desire) conflicts with both confidence and health (second-order desires) and therefore conflicts with happiness (her overall desire) making it an irrational desire, and thus, it should be disregarded. An agent must weigh her desires and disregard those that conflict with a desire of a higher order. In the next section, I will return to this hierarchical structure of desires to propose a method for weighing desires against one another.

I have now shown that 1) animals have mental states, including desires, and 2) it is at least possible to discover what those desires are through critical observation of animal behavior ("the primitive sign of wanting is trying to get")[39], so I will now address how animal desires in particular can meet the modified version of the desire-satisfaction theory of the human good.

Recall Kraut's first objection is that an agent's desires can conflict with her well-being. The type of counterexample Kraut has in mind is addiction. Take Stan, a lifelong smoker, who is addicted to nicotine. His addiction causes him to desire cigarettes even though he is fully aware of the connection between smoking and lung cancer. According to crude desire-satisfaction, cigarettes would be good for him. With a bit of prodding into the inner workings of Stan's psychological state, we would probably discover that his desire to smoke does not contribute to his overall desires (to be happy and healthy, say). Because of this contradiction, Stan's apparent desire to smoke should be disregarded under the modified desire-satisfaction account. Note the distinction between Kraut's first and third critiques. As I will soon show, animals can surely fall victim to desires that detract from their well-being but only because of lack of information. In this example, Stan knows all of the relevant information, recognizes that smoking detracts from his overall well-being, yet still desires cigarettes. Animals, on the other hand, are not subject to Kraut's first objection because they rarely, if ever, have a hierarchy of desires that is complex enough to fall victim to having, being aware of, and yet still maintaining desires that detract from their well-being. I am hard-pressed to think of an example in which an animal is aware that its fulfillment of a particular desire is detracting from its overall well-being, yet the animal freely chooses to fulfill the counterproductive sub-desire anyway as Stan the smoker does when he picks up his cigarettes. In this sense, applying desire-satisfaction to animals is even easier than applying it to humans.

The second condition of the modified desire-satisfaction account, which is in response to all three of Kraut's critiques, requires that the animals' desires be rational. Are animals capable of recognizing their desires as rational? Some animals probably are, but others, to whom we still want to attribute desires, are not. It does not matter, though, whether the animal itself is capable of recognizing its desires as rational. The determination of rationality can be imposed by humans based on our assessment of what is best for the animal in the same way that, in some cases, a parent "knows best" for their child. Six-year-old Margie, for example, probably does not desire to brush her teeth before she goes to bed. Her parents likely force her

[39] Anscombe, *Intention*, 68.

to do this because they presume it is most conducive to Margie's probable future overall desires, including the desire for health and longevity.[40] Once Margie is of a certain age, an age where she can understand the connection between teeth-brushing and gingivitis and where she can accurately assess the costs and benefits of teeth-brushing, her parents (hopefully) will cede to Margie's subjective desires.

Likewise, finding a goat that willingly flops over and lets its toenails be cut is highly unlikely. Instead, its caretaker wrestles it to the ground, straddles it, and takes to its feet with a pair of hedge clippers. The goat's behavior at this point is clearly not representing a desire to have its nails cut! So, what would make us think that we are acting on behalf of the goats' interests? In the alternative situation, the goat's nails are allowed to grow long, and he eventually begins to limp which will cause ankle or leg problems, and thus, pain. If the goat were able to recognize the connection between toenail clipping and pain and rationally weigh his desire not to have his nails clipped against the desire not to have pain that results from overgrown toenails, his behavior would likely be different. As in Margie's case, we are acting on behalf of the goat's probable potential desires. The rational goat, as fallibly conceived by a human, can give us insight into what the non-rational goat should desire (in order to be consistent with its overall desire not to feel pain) just as the rational human, an adult, can give us fallible insight into what the non-rational human, Margie, should desire. The goat should not be punished (by being in pain from overgrown toenails) for the shortcomings of its cognitive capacities. Determining the goat's desires might occasionally be somewhat of a guessing game or a tricky cost-benefit analysis, but most of the time it is safe to assume that the goat is capable of ensuring its own welfare.[41] If it desires food, it will eat. If it desires to be in the sun, it will walk outside. Margie's parents would probably say the same about her.

Meeting the third condition of the modified desire-satisfaction account also seems to require higher cognitive capacities of animals, including knowledge, which can become problematic for animals. This condition, like the second condition, can be dealt with in the same way a modified desire-satisfaction deals with children who cannot make clear-headed, wholehearted, and knowledgeable decisions because their cognitive capacities are insufficient. The goat in the example above who desires to avoid the nail-clipping experience probably cannot evaluate his desire clear-headedly because he does not understand the connection between nail-clipping and overall health. His desire to avoid the experience would be disregarded under the modified desire-satisfaction account. What about all of his other desires, though? Can the goat make any "clear-headed, wholehearted, and knowledgeable" decisions? Knowledge is the most difficult of these conditions to meet. Animals, though, can—at the least-have knowledge under proper functionalism, a kind of reliabilism whereby:

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[40] This is slightly tricky because Margie probably does not have the concepts "health" or "longevity" yet. Therefore, her parents are acting in the interests of her probable potential desire for those goods. It is good for her to brush her teeth because it is conducive to her health and longevity, something that she might not yet desire but that her parents can fallibly assume she *would* desire were she able to understand these concepts.

[41] This is consistent with the Humean action theory outlined above.

> A belief has warrant for me only if (1) it has been produced in me by cognitive faculties that are working properly… in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for my kinds of cognitive faculties… and (3) there is a high statistical probability that a belief produced under those conditions will be true.[42]

Basically, knowledge is attainable so long as it comes from a reliable cognitive process. One could make the argument that animals' cognitive capacities for determining their own desires are reliable in virtue of evolution.[43] If animals could not determine their own desires with a sufficient degree of accuracy, their desires would not be fulfilled. Considering that one of their primary desires is presumably to survive, animals that have withstood the test of natural selection are probably pretty reliable when it comes to determining and fulfilling their own desires.

Before closing this section, I want to ensure that I have not trivialized the importance of understanding animal desires in the context of our modern treatment of animals. Many issues are cut-and-dry: animals surely do not desire to be raised in cramped cages or to participate in painful experiments. Goats' toenails should be clipped even though there is initially some discomfort. Many dogs desire to play fetch. There are also more difficult issues to resolve, though, that require in-depth scientific inquiry. For example, many animal rights activists do not support zoos because they prevent animals from experiencing their natural habitats and engaging in natural behaviors. On the other hand, do they really desire to experience their natural habitats where they are constantly in danger of predation? Or, do they prefer the tranquil lifestyle of having carcasses fed to them instead of chasing antelope through the grasslands? These issues creep into all sorts of our relationships with animals, including those with farm animals: How much do chickens desire an extra few feet of space? For how long do calves prefer to stay with their mothers? I suspect that the answers to these questions are more complex than many people have taken them to be, and the answers to these questions can be found, at least in part, by gauging the animals' desires based on behavior.

Finally, I want to call attention to one of the desire-satisfaction account's chief advantages, which is that it can accommodate subjective desires. Despite the fact that animals are "beings like us" in many ways, their desires are probably still quite different from our own. To meet Kraut's valid objections to a crude desire-satisfaction account, animals are required to have rational and knowledgeable desires. Because of these high standards, I have argued that sometimes we, humans, "know best" in the same way that parents can know what is best for

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[42] Plantinga, Alvin. "Warrant: A First Approximation." In *Warrant and Proper Function*, 3–20. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

[43] Allan, Colin, and Marc Bekoff. "Function, Natural Design, and Animal Behavior: Philosophical and Ethological Consideratios." *Perspectives on Ethology* 11 (1995): 1–46.

their children. I argue this with caution, though, first because knowing about animal minds comes with a few obstacles and also because I do not want to detract from animals' autonomy. Animals are able to act intentionally, with rational understanding, and freely, so they have autonomy, at least in the weak sense, meaning that they can act on the basis of their independently-formed beliefs and desires.[44] A primary advantage of desire-satisfaction is to utilize this autonomy in determining their subjective desires and how to best fulfill those desires.

Desire-satisfaction is a theory of value—it says that the satisfaction of our (above-all, rational, and clear-headedly formed) desires is what gives life value. An ethical framework needs both a theory of value and a theory of right action.[45] In the following section, I will assess our treatment of animals using a consequentialist theory of right action with a desire-satisfaction theory of value.

2.3 There Ain't Room for the Both of Us— An Interspecies Desire Showdown

A consequence of desire-satisfaction is that it is good for an agent to satisfy *any* desire that withstands the modifications I outlined in Chapter 5. It is at least conceptually possible for an agent's desire to blow up a building to be conducive to a first-order desire, non-contradictory, and determined clear-headedly and with full knowledge of the relevant facts. So, is it right for this person to blow up a building? No. While the fulfillment of that desire would be good for that agent, it would not be right because its fulfillment would entail the dissatisfaction of all of the building occupants' desires to live. The bad (dissatisfaction of desires) would outweigh the good, so while the fulfillment of the bomber's desire would be good *for him*, it would be bad overall. To take another example, it may be good *for Alison* to fulfill her desire to play the drums at midnight, but if that desire is outweighed by the desires of her roommates to sleep, then the action is not morally right.

In explaining this example, I have assumed consequentialism, which I take to be the best theory of right action because it supports the uncontroversial principle that it is morally right to minimize the amount of suffering in the world and satisfies the popular assumption that a moral theory must be impartial.[46] Consequentialism says that an action is right to the extent that it maximizes the overall, rationally expectable good.[47] The account of desire-satisfaction I outlined in the previous section is a theory of value—it says that the satisfaction of our (above-

[44] Rowlands, Mark. *Animals Like Us*. London: Verso, 2002.

[45] Utilitarianism, for example, has a consequentialist theory of right action and a hedonistic theory of value.

[46] I will not offer a full defense of consequentialism here, but I hope that its chief advantages will become apparent as I assess animal welfare in its context.

[47] This is actually a refined, scalar version of consequentialism. These modifications take into account the intentions of the moral agent and recognize that rightness/wrongness can come in degrees, respectively.

all, rational, and clear-headedly formed) desires is what gives life value. An ethical framework needs both a theory of value and a theory of right action.[48] In this section, I will assess our treatment of animals using a consequentialist theory of right action with a desire-satisfaction theory of value, which says: an action is right to the extent that it contributes to the fulfillment the greatest amount of desires.[49] In other words, determining the morally right course of action involves weighing the desires of all parties involved against each other. Animals are eligible parties in this weighing exercise in virtue of the fact that they have desires—things matter to them. I might desire to electrocute a sheep to see if its hairs will stand on end like in the cartoons, but the sheep has desires too, notably the desire not to feel pain. It is pretty clear here that the right thing to do is to refrain from electrocuting the sheep, but what about cases where the conflict is not so easily resolvable?

Unfortunately, desires cannot be measured on beam balances. Attempting to assign cardinal utilities to desires would be taking a shot in the dark. Neither intensity or duration of pleasure versus pain nor number of desires turns out to be a reliable measure of comparative magnitude. Instead, Gary Varner defends Ralph Barton Perry's principle of inclusiveness and argues that it can be used to assign ordinal utilities to desires. The principle of inclusiveness is formulated by Varner as follows: "it is always better to satisfy all of the interests in a given set rather than any proper subset of that same set."[50] If I desire a birthday party with cake, balloons, friends, and party hats, then a party with all of those things is better than one with only cake and balloons. Perry restricts the application of this principle to intrapersonal conflict because the "aggregates of interests [must be] related as whole and part." This is very unsatisfying considering the prevalence of interpersonal conflict between desires. Should we just abandon the effort to weigh interpersonal desires? Varner thinks that the principle of inclusiveness can be extended so as to help mediate interpersonal conflict as well:

> (A3) Generally speaking, ensuring the satisfaction of interests from similar levels in similar hierarchies of different individuals creates similar amounts of value, and the dooming of interests from similar levels in similar hierarchies of different individuals creates similar levels of disvalue.[51]

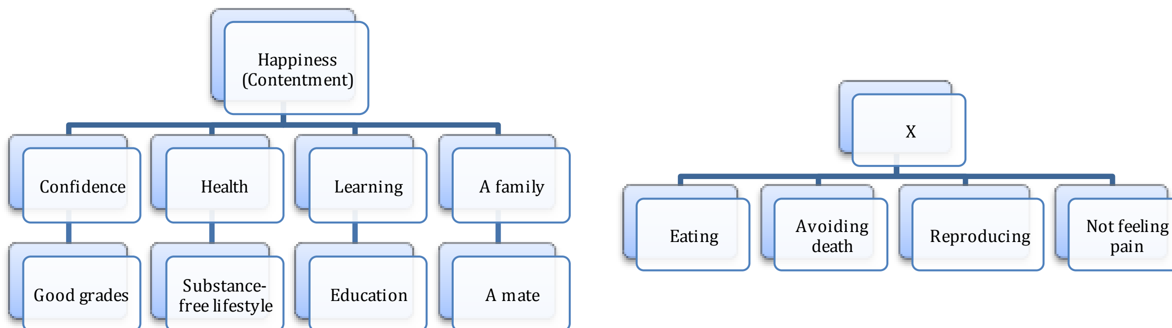
For example, when the fulfillment of one agent's second- or third-order desire would doom the fulfillment of another agent's first-order desire, the first-order desire should take priority. Intuitively, this makes sense, but should a first-order desire of an animal really be given equal weight to a first-order desire of a human? Varner thinks not.

Varner proposes that humans have a special type of first-order desires that are something like what Bernard Williams calls "ground projects." A ground project is a "'a nexus of

[48] Utilitarianism, for example, has a consequentialist theory of right action and a hedonistic theory of value.
[49] I will soon clarify what is meant by "greatest amount."
[50] Varner, *In Nature's Interests?*, 84.
[51] Varner, *In Nature's Interests?*, 90.

projects… which are closely related to [one's] existence and which to a significant degree give a meaning to [one's] life."[52] Ground projects are usually long-term and involve countless sub-desires. Examples might include the desire to have a fulfilling career, to enact positive change in the world, to spread one's religion, etc. Varner argues that animals are incapable of having ground projects because they do not "aspire [towards]… a way of life."[53] They can look towards the immediate future, but "formulating and prosecuting a ground project requires a level of conceptual sophistication that almost no nonhuman has."[54]

The principle of inclusiveness tells us that satisfying a ground project is better than satisfying a set of sub-desires that are instrumental to the fulfillment of a ground project. Since animals do not have ground projects, when the fulfillment of a human ground project is in conflict with an animal's desire, the human's ground project should be prioritized. For example, if a hiker encounters a bear and the bear desires to eat the human, the human's desire not to be eaten should be prioritized because the dooming of the desire not to be eaten would also doom the human's ground project to be happy. Varner's principle (A3) tells us to weigh different agents' desires that occupy roughly the same order on one's hierarchy evenly. The bear, unlike the human, does not have a ground project, so the human's desire wins out because it is occupies a higher order than the bear's desire. Their hierarchies might look something like this:



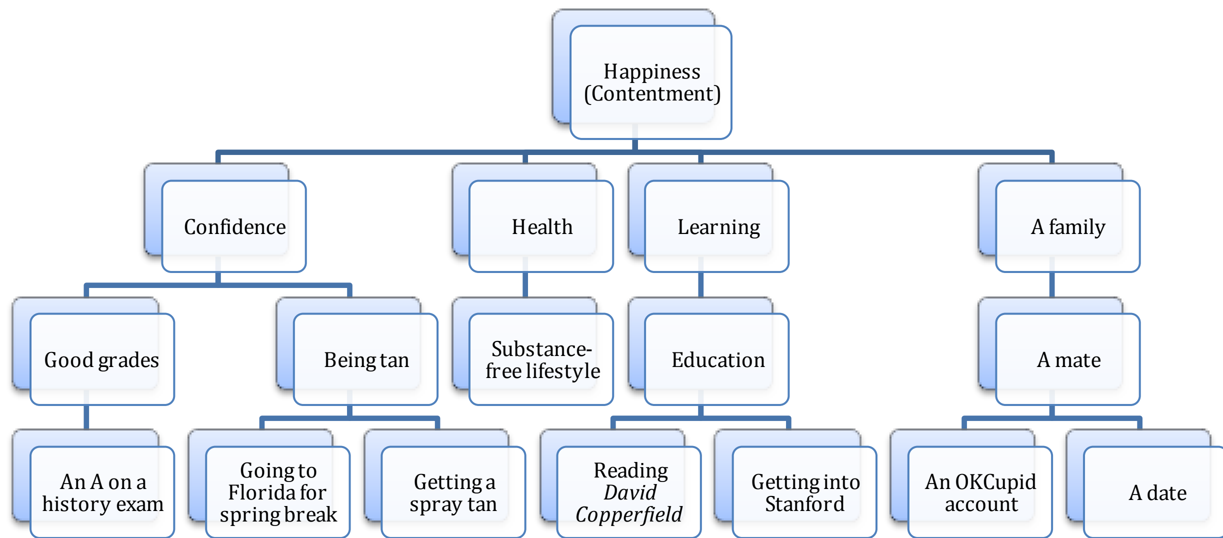
The fulfillment of the bear's desire to eat a human would not only doom a higher order desire on the human's hierarchy, but it would doom all of the human's desires, so its dissatisfaction would produce a greater utility than its satisfaction. Killing me, for example, is wrong because doing so would rob me of the chance to fulfill all of my current and future desires. I have the desire to finish my thesis, graduate from college, listen to good music, and start a sloth sanctuary in Costa Rica, as well as the same sorts of simple desires that the bear's death would dissatisfy (the desire to eat, avoid death, reproduce, and not feel pain).

A related consideration when resolving conflict between desires is how critical the desires are to the agents' respective hierarchies. The desire to live is the most critical desire

[52] Varner, *In Nature's Interests?*, 89.
[53] Varner, *In Nature's Interests?*, 92.
[54] Varner, *In Nature's Interests?*, 92.

because its dissatisfaction would entail the dissatisfaction of almost all other desires.[55] Any desire or need that must be fulfilled in order for the agent to live has the same hierarchical position as the desire to live. There is no *intrinsic* value in the fulfillment of a biological need, but the fulfillment of biological needs is often instrumental to the fulfillment of desires.[56] If it is the case that the satisfaction of a desire would be doomed if a certain biological need or sub-desire went unfulfilled, then the biological need or sub-desire should have the same priority as the desire.

The fulfillment of certain lower order desires can be integral to the fulfillment of some higher order desires, but, other times, lower order desires are replaceable. Take the expanded hierarchy below as an example:



The fulfillment of some of these desires is integral to the ground project, while others lift right out of the hierarchy. The dissatisfaction of the desire to get a spray tan, for example, would not impede on the satisfaction of other desires. One could achieve confidence by other means. Likewise, not reading *David Copperfield* would not have far-reaching consequences within the hierarchy. One could read *A Tale of Two Cities* or take a math class instead. The dissatisfaction of the desire for a mate, though, might severely compromise the fulfillment of the desire for a family. It is possible to have a family without having a mate, of course, but lack of a mate might mean only partial fulfillment of the desire for a family depending on the agent's preferences. A mate probably also contributes to confidence and potentially to health and/or learning as well. The more of a contribution it makes to the higher order desires, the more valuable it is.

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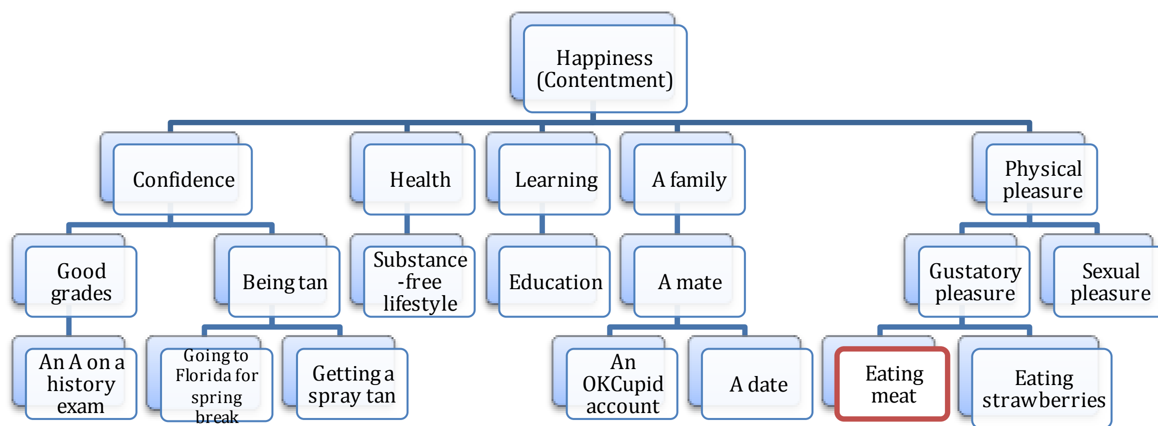
[55] Some desires could be satisfied posthumously, but generally the satisfaction of our desires requires that we are alive to reap the benefits of their fulfillment.

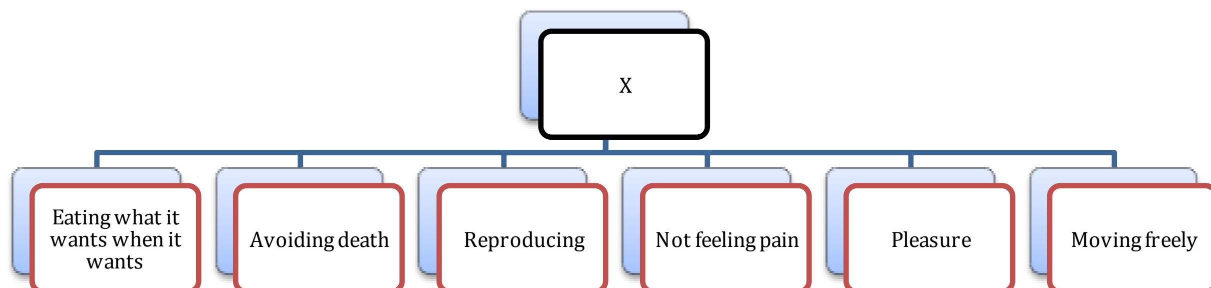
[56] The fulfillment of my desire to be healthy is contingent upon having a functioning liver, but I do not desire a functioning liver for its own sake. What good would a functioning liver be if it did not maintain my health?

Now, let us turn our attention meat consumption. In order to determine which action will produce the greatest good, we need to determine (roughly) where a human's desire to eat meat would fall on his or her hierarchy of desires relative to where an animal's desire not to be eaten would fall and how critical these desires are to the respective hierarchies. For starters, it is implausible that a human's desire to eat meat could constitute a ground project. It is hard to imagine someone whose life would *not be worth living* if they could not eat meat, barring extreme health cases. I will expand the hierarchy once more to suggest where the desire to eat meat might fall and assess its cruciality to the fulfillment of other desires.



The desire to eat meat has substitutes—there are alternative ways of achieving gustatory pleasure (strawberries) or physical pleasure (sexual pleasure) that do not threaten the ground project. Could eating meat be contributing to the fulfillment of other desires in the hierarchy? Is it critical to the fulfillment of other desires? These are empirical questions to which I will be able to provide some answers in Chapter 9.

Now, let us assess the consequences of eating meat from the animal's hierarchy of desires:



An animal raised in industrial agriculture[57] will have most—if not all—of these desires dissatisfied during its life, and, with its death, all of its desires will be unsatisfied with the exception of the desire not to feel pain (which *is* satisfied by death). Certainly, the satisfaction of all of these desires combined outweighs the satisfaction of the human's desire to eat that animal.[58]

The option of "ethical meat"[59] gives us an alternative formulation of this conflict: a human's desire to save the difference between the cost of industrial meat and ethically-raised meat versus the difference between the satisfaction of an animal's desires in industrial conditions and in "ethical" conditions. In this case, $2 can go a long way. The life of an animal who is destined for industrial meat versus the life of an animal in "ethical" conditions is drastically different. Think of all the things we spend $2 on here and there (one cup of coffee, a magazine, etc.) and compare the value we derive from those things to the value an animal derives from living in "ethical" conditions versus industrial conditions. Since the value of $2 is different depending on the wealth of the agent, the act of choosing to save $2 by buying industrial meat is worse for some people than for others. If Oprah were to opt for the cheaper, industrially-raised meat in order to save $2, we would not think highly of her at all, but if a poor man trying to feed his family bought the industrially-raised meat, our judgment would not be as harsh because the poor man's desire to save the difference in cost is greater than Oprah's desire to save that $2 price difference. Most of the time, these cases are not close contests. What $2 can do for a human is practically nothing (again, think about where the desire to save $2 would fall on the human's hierarchy above) compared to the difference between an animal's life in industrial agriculture versus in ethical conditions. In the animal's hierarchy above, for example, it could fulfill almost all of its desires living in ethical conditions compared to almost none in industrial conditions.

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[57] I will use "industrial agriculture" to refer to what others call "intensive animal agriculture," "CAFOs," and "fast-track farming." Unfortunately, these terms are all somewhat vague. I will also not be going into detail regarding the conditions under which an animal lives and dies in industrial agriculture, but I suggest:
Anon. 2008. *Putting Meat on the Table: Industrial Farm Animal Production in America*. Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production. http://www.ncifap.org/bin/s/a/PCIFAPSmry.pdf.
Dawkins, Marian Stamp, and Roland Bonney. *The Future of Animal Farming*. Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2008
Singer, Peter. 1975. *Animal Liberation*. New York: HarperCollins

[58] I have been assuming that the dissatisfaction of an animal's desires entailed in industrial meat production is in conflict with a single human's desire to eat that animal when, in fact, this is not completely accurate. One animal can feed multiple humans, so sometimes the desires of one animal should actually be weighed against the desires of multiple humans to eat meat. We might be inclined to adopt a "desire to bulk" ratio in order to determine which animals are better to eat than others. This project, though interesting and important, is outside the scope of this chapter.

[59] I will use ethically-raised meat to refer to meat from animals raised in painless conditions but whose lives are cut short. There is controversy over this term because 1) some take ethically-raised meat to be a contradiction and 2) the regulatory standards and labeling issues around ethically-raised or humanely-raised meat are a) not uniform and b) do not constitute acceptable welfare in the eyes of many advocates.

The last formulation of the conflict is the hardest to solve: a human's desire to eat meat versus an animal's desire not to have its life cut short (but living in "ethical" conditions). Because killing something robs it of the fulfillment of all of its desires (besides the desire to not feel pain), the human desire to eat meat is probably still outweighed in this case, but this case is admittedly a closer contest than the cases above. Most human-animal desire conflicts, though, take the shape of the first and second formulations. That is, most meat-eaters, through their actions, prioritize the fulfillment of their desire to eat meat over, in the first case, an animal's desires that are dissatisfied by a life and death in industrial meat, and, in the second case, the difference between an animal's desires dissatisfied in industrial meat and its desires dissatisfied in ethical conditions. This prioritization is unjustified considering the position and cruciality of the desire to eat meat on a human's hierarchy relative to the positions and cruciality of an animal's desires not to be eaten.

In conclusion, while killing animals may be permissible in cases where the fulfillment of their desire would doom a human's ground project, these cases are few and far between. Most of the conflict between human desires and animal desires in the context of meat consumption is between a human's desire to eat meat (which is a low-order desire that has adequate substitutes) and an animal's desires to live (which I have shown to be a special kind of desire in that its dissatisfaction dooms almost all of its other desires) and, in most cases, not live in intense pain.

2.4 The Cautionary Tale of the Cephalopod

I anticipate that the previous two sections will be met with some skepticism. It is admittedly difficult to weigh subjective phenomena like desires between agents, but we should not abandon the project. First of all, most of the conflict between humans and animals is easily resolvable. For the small sacrifice of a few bucks, we can satisfy the subset of an animal's desires that are satisfied in "ethical" conditions but not in industrial conditions. This subset includes the desire not to live in excruciatingly painful conditions, to move freely (or at least somewhat freely), to eat what it wants when it wants it, etc. This hardly seems like a contest, but a vast majority of the animals we are eating are raised in these conditions. A slightly closer contest is between a human's desire to eat meat and an animal's desire to live out the rest of its life in "ethical" conditions. I think it is more likely that the latter desire outweighs the former because of the special status that the desire to live has, but, as I always tell people, I am 90% happy with the person who eats ethically-raised meat. Once people are no longer eating industrial meat, I will turn my attention to these more difficult cases.

Some of the skepticism will creep in even prior to the plausibility of weighing interpersonal desires by taking issue with the claim that animals have desires in the first place. I have given arguments from analogy, inferred to the best explanation, and given physiological,

behavioral, and evolutionary evidence for the existence of animal desires. Even so, this is an uphill battle because of a cautionary principle in both philosophy and biology that avoids attributing mental states to animals. Known as Lloyd Morgan's canon, this principle says,

> In no case may we interpret an action as the outcome of the exercise of a higher psychical faculty, if it can be interpreted as the outcome of the exercise of one of which stands lower in the psychological scale.[60]

In other words, the burden of proof lies with those trying to attribute "higher" mental states to animals. This principle claims to be one of parsimony, but its critics point out that we would be remiss to study human behavior this way.[61]

The octopus can issue this warning against Lloyd Morgan's canon from stronger footing than anyone. *Amphioctopus marginatus,* for one, has recently joined the elite club of tool-users. They use a behavioral trick called stilt-walking (pun intended) in order to carry coconut shell halves discarded by the human populations of Northern Sulaweski and Bali in Indonesia.[62] After transporting the coconuts, the octopus uses them as a shelter to defend against predators. This behavior indicates rational thought because it involves complex cognitive processes like planning, problem-solving, and manipulating environment. Conceding this once-thought-to-be-exclusively-human trait to elephants and chimpanzees was one thing, but cephalopods!? They have more nerves in their arms than their brains! Our closest common ancestor is an urbilaterian! The phylogenetic gap between cephalopods and humans led us to underestimate cephalopod capabilities. Research that has emerged over the last twenty years indicates that octopus show similar pain responses to mammals and learn in ways that satisfy Varner's behavioral criteria for desires.[63]

This is a cautionary tale because it shows that even those animals for whom the argument by analogy to humans is weak may still qualify as desirers. It also casts doubt on Lloyd Morgan's canon because assuming the worst of octopuses in terms of their cognitive abilities would be to gravely underestimate them and unjustifiably discount their desires.

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[60] Cited in Bekoff, Marc, and Colin Allan. *Species of Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997, 25.

[61] See Midgley, Mary. "Why Farm Animals Matter." In *The Future of Animal Farming*. Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2008.

[62] Finn, J. K., T. Tregenza, and M. D. Norman. "Defensive tool use in a coconut-carrying octopus." *Current Biology* 19 (2009).

[63] Mather, J.A. "Navigation by spatial memory and use of landmarks by octopuses." *Journal of Comparative Physiology*, 168A (1991): 491-7.

Mather, J.A. "'Home' choice and modification by juvenile *Octopus vulgaris*: specialized intelligence and tool use?" *Journal of Zoology*, London, 233 (1994): 359-68.

Mather, J.A. "Eight arms, with attitude: octopuses count playfulness, personality, and practical intelligence among their leading character traits." *Natural History* 30 (2007):7.

Muntz, W. R. A. "An experiment on shape discrimination and signal detection in *Octopus*." *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology,* 22 (1970): 82-90.

Even if the cautionary scientific principle is valid and useful in science, we should limit its influence on our ethical behavior regarding animals because of the cautionary *ethical* principle that says we should treat animals well just in case they are being harmed. This cautionary ethical principle is essentially a recapitulation of what everyone's mother tells them: "better safe than sorry!" If it is the case that a cautionary principle like Lloyd Morgan's canon is viable and useful, then we should continue using it in science, but, if we also take into account the cautionary ethical principle, the cautionary scientific principle should not have much of an impact on our treatment of animals. Recall that most of the conflicts between human desires and animal desires are easy cases—cases where a small sacrifice on the part of a human would drastically improve an animal's life. So, better safe than sorry![64]

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[64] Historicizing the application of this cautionary ethical principle would strengthen the argument. Infants were given no anesthesia during surgery even into the 1980s because people were skeptical about their ability to feel, for example. Had the cautionary ethical principle taken precedence over the cautionary scientific principle, infants would have been much better off.
Chamberlain, David. "Babies Don't Feel Pain: A Century of Denial in Medicine". San Francisco, California, 1991.

3. The *Is* Meats the *Ought*

3.1 Situating the Normative in the Empirical

Now that I have found the one true normative theory, why should I care what the laypeople have to say? Well, there are plenty of reasons to care. First, as indicated by my sarcasm, it is unlikely that I, an undergraduate college student, have narrowed in on the one true normative theory. Hopefully, though, I am closer to it than my participants who have not spent considerable time engaging with philosophical literature and sitting in ethics courses. I acknowledged, however, the possibility that they could advance arguments that change or tweak the theory I endorse. Second, insofar as I am claiming that *most people* are engaging in a morally impermissible practice, it will be interesting to know a) what their own moral judgments related to this issue are, b) whether their actions comply with their moral judgments, and c) *why* they make those moral judgments. This information is relevant for pragmatic reasons as well as philosophical ones. Practically speaking, if we can understand where people's judgments go wrong—perhaps their judgment that eating meat is morally permissible is grounded in (unmerited) skepticism about animal minds—, then we know where to spend our energy arguing for improved treatment of animals. These focus sessions also gave me insight into the nature of moral discourse. When people argue about moral issues, are they trying to prove the existence of moral facts or trying to exert influence? In making moral decisions, are people guided by Kantian practical reason or by Humean desires? What roles do sociological, religious, and historical factors play in moral decision-making? These important metaethical questions are ripe for empirical study since they ask how we *actually do* engage in moral discourse.

I optimistically hypothesized that the power of reason would prevail—would change minds!—when people participate in a brief, deliberate experience that facilitates confrontation between the ethics of meat consumption, scientific truths about animal capacities, and the actual practice of meat consumption. Rather than having the goal of changing people's beliefs and/or behavior (although I must admit this was welcomed side effect), my primary goal was to see if an experience like this *could* change beliefs and/or behavior.

I created small focus group for each of the following four factions of people representing disparate attitudes and consumption patterns:

1) ethical vegans (assumed to be reflective)
2) unreflective meat-eaters participating in industrial meat consumption
3) reflective meat-eaters participating in industrial meat consumption

4) mixed—vegans, unreflective meat-eaters, and reflective meat-eaters[65]

These four groups were selected based on their responses to a screening survey (See Appendix A) designed to gauge their level of reflectivity[66] around meat-eating, as well as their concrete consumption patterns. I recruited participants with a passive flyering technique, on Craigslist, and on OregonLive.com. Each group started with 6-9 participants (32 in total), 1-4 of which dropped out during the course of the study leaving 21 participants who completed the entire study. The groups attended three separate focus sessions for a total of five hours, and these were videotaped and transcribed. Participants were compensated for their time. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Lewis & Clark College.

The purpose of the first session was two-fold. First, it set the stage for an open and honest discussion in the weeks to come by familiarizing the participants with one another. The goal was for them to realize that they are in a room full of people with similar views to their own. This is critical because of the risk of social desirability bias or "warm glow effect," whereby participants will tend to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others or themselves. "Warm glow effect" and social desirability bias had the potential to skew my results in two places. First, participants' answers to the screening survey questions may reflect a desire to view themselves in a more positive light ("warm glow effect") or a desire for the researcher to view them in a more positive light (social desirability bias). Although I concede that completely eliminating this bias is unlikely, there are combative strategies. I posed the survey questions in a neutral, un-charged manner to mitigate the bias, and conducted the surveys online (with no researcher-participant face-face contact). The second place where one might expect social desirability bias to creep in is during the focus group sessions. Here, I return to my point about the intention of this first session. If participants feel that they are in the company of like-minded individuals, they are less likely to feel judged and more likely to speak openly and honestly. [67]

The second purpose of the first session was to get an idea of how meat consumption (or a lack thereof) fits into the broader picture of people's lives. I asked participants if they grew up eating meat, if they knew any vegetarians, if any of their religious beliefs effected their meat consumption, etc. These discussions also generated data on the empirical questions about human desires to eat meat that I raised in Chapter 6.

The second session had two main components. The first was a general discussion of morality and, the second, a general discussion about animals and their capacities. The

[65] Some of the meat-eaters in the mixed group did not consume any industrial meat.
[66] Participants were given a reflectivity score based on their screening survey responses. Questions that contributed to participants' reflectivity scores are highlighted in Appendix A.
[67] Nederhof, A. J. 1985. "Methods of coping with social desirability bias: A review." *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 15: 263–280. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.2420150303

participants did draw a connection, but my goal was to refrain from being explicit about the moral consideration of animals just yet. That comes in the third session.

Everyone operates within an implicit ethical framework, although this framework can certainly have inconsistencies—sometimes so much so that I would hesitate to call it a "framework." The key point, though, is that most people believe some things are right and others are wrong. I wanted to spark a discussion about what morality is at the very basic level. I encouraged participants to identify their own moral beliefs by sharing an issue they care about and asking them to walk me through the reasons why they hold those beliefs, etc. As the facilitator, I often played the devil's advocate to stir up conversation, I frequently referenced established ethical frameworks in philosophy, and I also defended my own view to the groups. My goal was to challenge the coherence of each group's belief set equally because the best ethical framework will be one with maximum coherence.

The latter half of the second session was devoted to animals. It began with a paper survey that aims to assess people's attitudes towards animals asking them to attribute various capacities to them.[68] Then we moved into the conversation about capacities. Can animals think? Do animals have emotions? Can animals feel pain?

In the third and final session, I began by giving each participant a worksheet/quiz on meat consumption in the United States. After the quiz, we went over the answers as a group, and I showed a ten-minute exposé on factory farming in order to make an explicit connection session two's discussions of animals and ethics, and meat. For the remaining hour and a half, we discussed the ethics of meat consumption.

Finally, I sent out a follow-up survey (See Appendix B) in order to gauge any changes in belief and meat consumption practices as a result of participating in the focus sessions.

If even experiments conducted in biology and chemistry yield results that the researchers could not have anticipated, then this methodology was certain to lead me in unpredictable directions. Indeed, it did. The remainder of this chapter shares the "results" of this empirical research, which were both philosophically interesting and pragmatically valuable. For the most part, these results do not fit into tables or graphs. Rather, I have situated these results in the space between the empirical and the normative in an attempt to connect philosophy to practice.

3.2 Trump Cards in the Game of Ethics

The desire-satisfaction-based consequentialism that I defended earlier is a universalizable ethical theory—it applies to all people, at all times. I argued that some of the

[68] Driscoll, Janis Wiley. "Attitudes Toward Animals: Species Ratings." *Society and Animals* 3, no. 2 (1995): 139–150.

appeal of desire-satisfaction is that it can accommodate diverse subjective desires. Determining the rightness or wrongness of eating meat, then, is a function of the subjective desires of the specific desirers involved, rather than a hard-and-fast imperative such as “Eating meat is never permissible.” I have devoted a considerable amount of time to arguing that animals are desirers too and that the methodological worries about animal minds should not inhibit us from giving their desires moral consideration. Now, I turn my attention to the other side of the scale, to the desires of human beings to eat meat.

Here is a clear window for the empirical to turn around and inform our universalizable ethical theory. If we are interested in human abilities and desires, then we should go study actual humans! Where on their hierarchy of desires does the desire to eat meat fall? How crucial is it to the fulfillment of other desires? Are there substitutes that would still ensure the fulfillment of the higher order desires that depend on it?

Before considering human desires, though, we must first consider human abilities. Inabilities are trump cards in this weighing game. If humans were *unable* to go without meat—if not eating meat was not even a possibility, — then weighing desires would be a futile project. In other words, if the moral imperative “we should treat animals better by not consuming factory farmed meat” is to have any force, then not consuming factory farmed animal products needs to be an available alternative.

This is a way of expressing the oft-touted phrase *ought implies can*. We do not blame sixteen-year-olds for not voting because they are not allowed to vote. I might tell my father that he ought to run a marathon to raise money for AIDS prevention, but I certainly would not tell my ailing grandmother the same thing. Her physical abilities constrain what she ought to do. At the basic physiological level, humans are not obligate carnivores. I will not argue that being vegan is better or worse from a nutritional standpoint, but as long as humans are *able* to not eat meat, health considerations are counted as desires (albeit quite legitimate ones) rather than inabilities. Even the strongest advocates of animal welfare/rights concede that there are rare exceptions to this obligation when not eating meat would drastically degrade a human’s health, such as for people with severe cases of anemia who would not be *able* to live without some meat.

Human physiological considerations are one set of constraints weighing against the desires of farm animals not to suffer, but there are other constraints. I will now turn my attention to psychological and sociological constraints to vegetarianism/veganism, asking whether these considerations could fall into the trump category or if they should be treated as desires.

One psychological barrier to not eating meat is lack of awareness. Of the 220 people who took my screening survey, 8% did not know what an animal byproduct was, 10% did not know a single vegetarian, 22% did not know a vegan, and 3% did not know what a vegan was. (If this is the case in Portland, then that is not good news for the rest of America.) One participant

named Darren[69] who recently moved to Portland from Washington D.C., when asked in a focus group if he knew any vegetarians, said "Well I know people who eat vegetables—is that what you mean?" If the idea of being vegetarian has never even occurred to someone, it seems too demanding to require that s/he become one. We would not blame someone for purchasing a stolen stereo if they did not know that the stereo was stolen. This type of ignorance is of a different class than most ignorance around these issues, which takes the shape of "I know bad stuff happens to the animals we eat, but I don't want to think about it." Take Holly, a 20-year-old college student in the reflective group, who said, "I'm the kind of person who's like 'bacon tastes amazing, so let's forget about it [animal suffering]. I don't like to feel guilty." I am inclined to dismiss the latter sort as a legitimate excuse, although it might be interesting to ask whether this person is a better moral agent than someone with the same meat consumption habits but who knows quite well the suffering of animals in factory farmed conditions.

An extreme lack of awareness like Darren's might qualify as a trump card, but I began to question this possible exemption when I heard the stories of how the vegan participants became vegan. One participant, Fiona, had never heard of a vegan or a vegetarian when she decided to become one at the age of sixteen. She told me,

> I was on the internet looking for cute pictures of animals on Google and I stumbled across a site about animals being abused and it had a page per every species of animals humans used. I kind of absorbed all of that and decided I didn't want anything to do with that any more so I made the decision to be vegan.

She then went and told her step mom, "I'm going to be a veggan [VEH-juhn]." That minimal amount of awareness was enough for her to make the correct moral judgment about meat-eating. It was far more difficult for her to become vegan because of her lack of exposure to a vegan lifestyle, but it was certainly *possible*.

Darren was not only constrained by a lack of awareness, though. He was constrained by a lack of choice. Fiona's parents, although not thrilled about her decision to become vegan, supported her by allowing her to have a choice about what she ate. When I asked Darren whether he felt like he had a choice about what he ate growing up said, "The only choice I had growin up was how much salt and how much pepper I was gonna put on my chicken." Darren proceeded to describe one of those chickens:

> My grandmother—she was from North Carolina—and she had her own chicken coop.., but I mean I'm from the city, I ain't ever seen that before so she'd go in there and grab it then she'd take it and throw it in the pot with hot boiling water

[69] All names have been changed.

> and you'd hear POCK! POCK!, feathers all over the kitchen, and it startled me for a moment… but that's how they did it.

Another participant, Rodney from Newberg, OR, followed up:

> And if you're a guest, who are you to question? You can't be like 'grandma don't do it like that!' Maybe it's just generational, but if you're growing up, it's like if you're at your grandparents and she prepares a meal for Sunday dinner, you don't question or say 'I'm not gonna eat that'…
>
> Darren: Yeah exactly.

Three other participants in this group echoed the sentiment.

This is an interesting candidate for a trump card. I am inclined to take these participants at their word when they say that not eating meat was not possible growing up, but it still seems that the *can* would no longer constrain the *ought* after the age of eighteen. Take James' story:

> When I was a freshman in college, I read *Animal Liberation* [by Peter Singer], and, at the point, I had almost never read a book. I had been Christian my whole life, and I had also almost never had a meal without meat in it, which is very common in Texas, except for peanut butter & jelly. But after reading that book, not only did I decide I had to stop eating animal products—or first meat and shortly thereafter animal products—but I decided that I had to switch my major to a Philosophy major because that's what the author had studied. I had to find out if there was a counterargument to the book, and I still haven't found one and whether there were any arguments that were of that quality in general, just any argument that was of that quality and there are arguments that I like but there aren't any arguments of the quality of the argument put forth in [Animal Liberation] so since I've never found a counterargument, I haven't changed my diet since then. And part of it was religious, affected my religious views, and, as long as I've been a vegetarian and not eaten animal products, I haven't been Christian. And it's distanced myself from my family who are entirely Christian—very Christian—and would never think about having a vegetarian meal, but I can't change. The change for me was permanent.

James' story is exceptional for a number of reasons. James' lifestyle, his religion, and his family were all powerful factors weighing against his decision to be vegan, but, clearly, none of these factors meant he was *unable* to be vegan. They just made it harder. James' veganism seems more admirable than that of some of the other vegans in the group for whom going vegan did

not present such a challenge. Nicole, for example, cited a lack of vegan chocolate products as her greatest obstacle. Her sister had already gone vegan, so she had some support, and she did not have to change her life in any drastic way in order to accommodate the new diet. I argue that James' decision is more admirable than Nicole's because his desires to live his life as he knew it were in closer competition with animals' desires to live or not feel pain than were Nicole's desires. In other words, James' desire to eat meat was strongly tied to some of his higher order desires like having close relationships with his family and maintaining his religious views. Nicole's desire to eat animal products, however, lifted out of her hierarchy of desires pretty easily.

To clarify this point, I will build on Peter Singer's famous thought experiment. Imagine a group of children drowning in a pond. There are adults on various sides of the pond. One man is already wading in his swim trunks. A woman is walking by on her way to a very important meeting at work. There's another woman on the opposite side of the pond, which is protected by a barbed wire fence. The end of the pond closest to her is known for having an abundant electric eel population. An elderly gentleman is farther away, behind twenty feet of thorny thicket and the barbed wire fence. Finally, there is a man nearby in a wheelchair. Under the version of consequentialism for which I argued, it is more wrong for some of these adults to neglect the children than others. If the swimming man simply continued practicing his dead man's float despite seeing children drowning nearby, we would find him morally abhorrent. For a very small sacrifice, he could save the life of a child. The woman walking to work has to make a slightly greater sacrifice, but this still pales in comparison to the good that would result from saving a child's life. As for the woman on the opposite side of the fence, we might still blame her for not climbing the fence and risking injury, but we would blame her considerably less than the swimming man. The same goes for the elderly gentlemen. His desire not to forge through the thicket, to not experience the pain of climbing over the barbed wire fence, and to not risk injury by electric eel are all legitimate reasons weighing against the desires of the children not to drown. Again, we might still think it morally wrong of him to take no action, but surely we would find the swimming man to be a worse person than the elderly gentleman. The adult in the wheelchair can play a trump card. We would never blame him for not jumping in after the children because, had he jumped in, he would have been *unable* to save the children.

James' decision to become vegan is like the elderly gentleman's decision to save the child, whereas Nicole's decision looks more like that of the woman on her way to an important meeting. I do not think that any of my participants should be granted wheelchair status, although ignorance, lack of a choice, and other psychological or sociological factors might push them farther and farther away from the pond.

Now that we have established that most people have the ability to not eat meat and that the constraints mentioned above count as desires to eat meat, let us turn to the other human desires weighing against the weighing against an animal's desires that are doomed in becoming meat.

Meat-eating participants cited a number of ways in which going vegetarian or vegan would inhibit the fulfillment of their desires. The most salient were health and gustatory pleasure. Four participants reported feeling significantly worse health-wise when they do not eat meat. One said he had anemia and would not be able to live without meat. The desire to be healthy is crucial to our hierarchies of desires because its fulfillment is a precondition for so many of our other desires. For the anemic, eating meat is a precondition for the fulfillment of every one of his desires because, if he were dead, every desire would be doomed. When the desires of a human to live are pitted against those of an animal, the human's desires should take priority as I argued in Chapter 6. In these cases, however, recall that the conflict shifts to one between the human's desire to save the extra few dollars on ethically-raised meat and the difference between an animal's desires dissatisfied in industrial meat and its desires dissatisfied in ethical conditions. So, while it is morally right for the anemic to eat meat, it is still morally wrong for him to eat industrial meat since there is a substitute.

There was one participant, a reflective meat-eater in the mixed group named Michael, whose athleticism was strongly tied to his identity, and, for him, not eating meat at all would infringe upon the fulfillment of his desire to cycle and run. Because the option of ethically-raised meat is a relevant alternative, the conflict is between Michael's desires to be in good shape plus his desire to not spend the $2 extra it costs to buy ethically-raised meat and an animal's desire to live out the rest of its life. I will accept this as a borderline case—a close contest between human's and an animal's desires.

A second kind of desire for meat is the desire for gustatory pleasure. Meat tastes good, or, as one vegan participant described it, "the enjoyment of flesh" is a powerful force. The gustatory pleasure derived from eating meat was a strong consideration in the minds of many of the meat-eaters. Wade, who very rarely goes a day without eating meat, said "I gotta have meat with every meal. It just ain't worth eatin' if you don't have meat." Aban also expressed strong feelings about his love for meat when he described the longest period during which he forwent meat:

> My longest was maybe four months, and it was the worst four months ever. It was the first time I came to America [from Pakistan], and I used to go to Reed, where they didn't have any halal options. I didn't want to [not eat meat], but I did it because I believed in my religion. That next day when I finally got a piece of meat, it was the best day of my life.

Aban's comment brings forth an important point, which is that if you have a strong enough reason not to eat meat, then it is certainly possible to not eat meat. If eating meat somehow conflicted with personal relationships, caused severe liver damage, or cost a lot of money, most people would probably forego the fulfillment of their desire to eat meat, which indicates that eating meat is a lower order desire relative to these other ones. Aban said that he remembers a

time when he felt like Wade but that he can now enjoy a meal without meat in it. All of the vegans reported that the gustatory desire to eat meat and other animal by-products faded pretty quickly and that being vegan "is really second nature." Of the meat-eaters who had tried going vegetarian for longer than one month, none reported being driven back to meat by a gustatory desire. The desire to eat meat for gustatory pleasure lifts pretty cleanly out of one's hierarchy because there are substitutes (strawberries taste pretty good!) and it appears to be a lower order desire (as evidenced by the fact that its fulfillment is sacrificed when it comes into conflict with religious desires, for example).

Our desires to eat meat go beyond the desires for physical health and gustatory pleasure—they are bound up with other psychological and social desires. James' story illustrates how the desire to eat meat is embedded in higher order desires related to religion and personal relationships, but there are less poignant examples of how eating meat effects other desires ranging from "[Dating a vegan] changed what I had in mind for a first date" to "Being vegetarian was socially awkward." One vegan, Beth, said her parents "were both kind of embarrassed and mad" and "tried to get [her] to eat meat." Shaun, a reflective meat-eater from the mixed group who preferred to raise and slaughter his own meat, as well as few other participants acknowledged that "malehood [is] tied up in meat." Greg, a reflective meat-eater from Iowa who spent one day working in a slaughterhouse, even offered, "vegetarian food requires a lot of chewing." These are all legitimate reasons to eat meat, but most, if not all, of them are outweighed by the desires of animals to not be raised and slaughtered in industrial meat production.

The diversity of vegans can be taken as a testament to the priority of an animal's desire not to be meat over a human's to eat that meat. As one meat-eater described it, vegans can be "all kinds of different people from people that wear suits and all that and people that dress like moms all the time." In other (and hopefully clearer) words, while the choice to be vegan or vegetarian is certainly more significant than just trading in salami for salad, being vegan or vegetarian does not have to entail a total restructuring of one's hierarchy of desires. Among the vegans, there were varying degrees to which the decision not to eat animal products effected other aspects of their lives. On one end, Heather admitted that going vegan may have cost her some of her friends (although this was not necessarily a bad thing from her point of view). On the other side of the spectrum, Simon said that being vegan is "just kind of one aspect of who I am." This indicates that the desires to eat meat, while they can be tied to other desires in one's hierarchy, are not vital to the fulfillment of higher order desires or especially ground projects. None of the vegans said that their lives were significantly worsened by their dietary choice. What is even more convincing is the fact that none of the former vegetarians in the meat-eating groups cited the difficulty of being vegetarian as their reason for consuming meat again. Instead, they said things like "[being vegetarian] just didn't jive with my beliefs" or "[being vegetarian] was just my way of rebelling against my parents." Later, I will address these reasons in terms of the participants' own ethical frameworks, but the purpose of this section is to show how the desires of actual meat-eaters and vegans fit into their hierarchies of desires and weigh

against the actual desires of animals regardless of whether the participants think this is the correct ethical framework to use.

I have challenged the status of psychological, sociological, and some physiological barriers to veganism as "trump cards," arguing instead that they should be weighed like desires, albeit very strong ones in some circumstances. A consequence of this view is that it is more wrong for some agents to eat meat than for others in the same way that it is more wrong for the man already in his swim trunks to ignore the drowning child than for the elderly gentlemen who would have to scrape through the thicket, climb a barbed wire fence, and risk electrocution by eels. I also argued that the desire to eat meat can go beyond the desires for gustatory pleasure and health; it can be enmeshed in a suite of social desires as well. Even so, the dissatisfaction of the desire to eat meat does not appear to threaten the fulfillment of higher order desires and especially ground projects. The experiences of the vegans and former vegetarians in the meat-eating groups show how not eating animal products does not significantly degrade the quality of one's life. The desire to eat meat can be lifted out of one's hierarchy of desires without leaving too much destruction in its path. If this is the case, then why don't more people stop eating meat? In the following two sections, I explain how meat evades morality such that meat-eaters do not perceive a conflict of interest between consumers and the consumed. If no conflict is perceived in the first place, then it is unlikely to be resolved.

3.3 Moralizing Meat

Prior to conducting this research, I took it for granted that the decision whether or not to eat meat is a moral decision. I considered philosophical arguments against vegetarianism as well as for vegetarianism, but all of these arguments still counted themselves as *moral* arguments. Anytime there are two or more possible actions that will produce different amounts of good, we ought to take one action and not the other. Coupled with desire-satisfaction, this implies that anytime desires are pitted against one another, as I have shown to be the case in farm animal welfare issues, there stands to be a better or a worse outcome. Apparently, these claims are not as straightforward as I had thought. Both my conception of what falls inside the domain of morality in general and my interpretation of meat consumption as an ethical issue were strikingly disparate from the views of my participants.

The participants in my focus sessions perceived a rift between ethics and everyday life that alienated morality from everyday life and detached everyday life from morality. In the second session, when I asked the groups to share "*everyday* examples of moral decisions" that they make in their own lives and how they reasoned through those decisions, the responses were not at all what I had anticipated. One participant immediately cited a story he heard on NPR about a German scientist whose contribution to nitrogen-fixing fertilizer made food

available to hundreds of thousands of people but who went on to "basically create mustard gas" and "was into killing Jews." The show posed the question: *If you could go back in time and kill this person, knowing what he would do, would you kill him?* This is certainly a moral dilemma, but it is definitely not of the "everyday" sort. Many participants had difficulty thinking of everyday examples, even when I pressed them and offered examples such as whether or not it is okay to steal pens from work or whether to drive or take the bus.

Even in some of the extreme or non-everyday examples there was a tendency for the moral component to be either overlooked or overridden, thrusting the decision into the domain of "personal choice." For example, I gave the classic thought experiment in which a doctor has five patients dying of organ failure and a healthy man walks into the hospital. The doctor realizes that if he kills this one healthy man, he will save five lives. Should he kill the man? After a few minutes of debate, I modified the experiment to ask what you should do if you were the healthy person and you had been given a chance to consent to die in order to save five lives. As that healthy person, what should you do? Michael responded with, "I don't know if there is a *should do*. It's a personal choice." Nick echoed his sentiment, "yeah, it's a *would do*." I do not wish to deny that there is a *would do* involved—it is completely plausible that you would not actually act in accordance with what you should do, —but to deny that there is a *should do* at all is mistaken because some outcomes would produce more good than others.

Meat-eating proved particularly recalcitrant to morality, belonging instead to this distinct domain of "personal" or "individual choice." Of the 220 people who took the screening survey, 52% said that deciding whether to eat meat is *not* a moral decision. It certainly is a "personal choice" in the sense that the ultimate decision belongs to the consumer, but the participants used "personal choice" in the sense that what color socks you choose to wear in the morning is a personal choice. Participants said choosing between industrial meat versus ethically raised meat "is up to the individual" or that "it depends on the individual's beliefs." Statements about the ethics of meat consumption were usually prefaced by "for me" or "personally," as if those phrases functioned as disclaimers of some sort. According to the ethical framework I laid out, there is certainly room for the interests of individuals to play a role in these ethical decisions, but an animal's interests are at stake as well, unlike in the choice of which socks to wear.

Interestingly, even when participants felt confident in the moral judgment that consuming industrial meat is wrong, they were reluctant to extend those judgments beyond their own personal actions. Jenny, a young farmer and former vegan who eats only meat that she or her friends have raised and slaughtered, expresses this view:

> I, morally, personally can't support [industrial meat production]. I can't do that, but I also don't feel like I have the right to tell anybody else to eat that way because food is such an individual choice. If somebody is okay with that, who am I to tell them that it's not okay? I have very strong opinions about that. I would [inform people about industrial meat production] and let people make their own

> decisions, but if people don't think that it's morally wrong to support that then I don't know.

I followed up by asking her what she would do if her neighbor was a slave-owner in the times of slavery. Do you have an obligation to intervene? Jenny replied, "I definitely do in that situation. I'd do whatever I could." When Ruben, a vegan in this mixed group, asked her "What would be the difference between that and the meat-eating situation?," she did not give a clear answer.

Both acts are judged to be wrong, but one requires intervention and the other does not? Most people think you ought to speak up when you hear a racist joke, turn in murderers, or say something to a family of hikers that is leaving behind their trash. Nobody would find the response "being racist is *just my personal choice*" or "in *my opinion*, it's okay to murder" even remotely persuasive. "Personal choice" can quickly become a dangerous vacuum where "anything goes." For this reason, I think it is important to "moralize meat"—to force meat out of the comfort zone occupied by carrots, pistachios, and other desireless delicacies by recognizing the conflict of interest between the consumers and the consumed.

What turns a personal choice into an ethical decision is a conflict of interest.[70] Under desire-satisfaction, individuals can do what they please up until the fulfillment of their desires would impede the fulfillment of other (more heavily weighted) desires. The decision whether to eat carrots or celery is a personal choice because only my desires are at stake.[71] Once meat gets involved, though, an animal's desires enter the equation. Participants, particularly meat-eaters (unsurprisingly), were reluctant to accept that the decision to eat meat is a moral one *even if* they accepted that industrial meat production is morally wrong and that consuming industrial meat drives industrial meat production. Every single participant believed the former and most accepted the latter as well. Only some of the meat-eaters, though, arrived at the conclusion that consuming industrial meat is morally wrong. Here's the argument, a hypothetical syllogism:

P1: Consuming industrial meat drives industrial meat production.
P2: Industrial meat production is morally wrong.
C: Consuming industrial meat is morally wrong. [72]

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[70] Technically, personal choices are also ethical decisions if one option would produce more good (which is morally valenced) for that agent than another option, but from here out, I will use "ethical decision" only to refer to those decisions which involve conflict between desires of more than one party.

[71] This is slightly oversimplified because, while carrots and celery do not have desires, the people (and potentially animals) involved in their production may have some of their desires satisfied or dissatisfied by your decision to consume them.

[72] Or, in less straight-forward language:
P1: If industrial meat is consumed, then industrial meat is produced.
P2: If industrial meat is produced, then something morally wrong happens.
P3: If industrial meat is consumed, then something morally wrong happens.

P1: If p, then q.

This argument, though both valid and sound, was somehow still unconvincing to the meat-eaters. Jamie, a participant in the unreflective group, explains the worry: “I think we all agree that [industrial meat production] is horrible, but I don’t see the correlation between this being horrible and not eating meat. There’s a huge gap between that and eating meat.” Vince, a contractor from San Antonio, TX, shared this sentiment: ”I fail to see the direct link between my eating chicken meat and the suffering that almost certainly goes on in chicken farms or feed lots.” The other participants in the group agreed and elaborated on this disconnect. Rodney offered: “We don’t drive down I-5 and see these electrocuted cows kicked and beaten so we’re detached from that connection. It’s not part of our everyday society we see. We see the end product, but it’s packaged in a certain way.” Jamie followed up with:

> …It’s very simple to say I know I’m if being nice to you or mean to you or if I’m not, but with this choice of the meat we buy, it’s very convoluted. It’s not clear. All we see is a package, a piece of product. It’s very unclear and it’s hard to line up those things. It’s hard to do that…

I agree with Jamie and Rodney. Meat products have an ambiguous connection to their animal origins. Consumers have been so far removed from the live animal through industrialization that they consume meat as simply “food” rather than “dead animal.” In their article “Getting Down to the Meat: The Symbolic Construction of Meat Consumption,” Bettina Heinz and Ronald Lee argue that, “commodity fetishism in marketplace exchange removes the production process from the meaning of meat and, thereby, silences the slaughter of animals.”[73] Meat purchased at a grocery store in a shrink-wrapped Styrofoam package is generally labeled with information about the piece of meat itself such as its fat content and cut type but fails to reveal information about the conditions of its production. Meat media discourse encourages this fetishization by omitting clear references to animals. It is most fully characterized by what is absent from it: a discussion about humans eating live animals. As Heinz and Lee argue, “American language eradicates dead-body-tissue images and, instead, uses meat words—‘beef,’ ‘mutton,’ ‘ham,’ ‘bacon,’ and ‘pork,’ which evoke meals, or at worst, packaged raw beef and pork in the grocery aisles.”[74] Heinz and Lee argue that due to this separation, “meat takes on the positive connotations surrounding food and meals” instead of the negatively perceived connotations of dead animals.[75] I would elaborate on Bettina and Heinz’s argument to say that

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P2: If q, then r.

C: If p, then r.

[73] Heinz & Lee, *The Symbolic Construction of Meat*, 86.
[74] Heinz & Lee, *The Symbolic Construction of Meat*, 94.
[75] Heinz & Lee, *The Symbolic Construction of Meat,* 87.

the *moral valence* of a slaughtered animal is lost during the transformation from animal being to animal product, thus alleviating consumers' moral concern.

Hypothetical syllogisms are gapless, so how are we to understand this "gap" to which Jamie referred in the context of the argument laid out above? Jamie and Rodney, as well as most of the other participants in that group, were offering explanatory reasons for their actions and attitudes as opposed to justificatory reasons. Explanatory reasons are the reasons that *an agent has* for an action or attitude, whereas justificatory or normative reasons are the reasons *there are* for an action or attitude.[76] All justificatory reasons are good ones (by definition). Explanatory reasons can be good or bad. If I do not support Barack Obama because I believe he is a leprechaun and I dislike leprechauns, this is a bad reason not to vote for him since he is not a leprechaun.

The fact that meat loses its moral valence in the production process *explains* the attitude held by some of the meat-eaters that consuming industrial meat is not morally wrong, but it does not *justify* that attitude—it does not give us a *normative* reason to reject the conclusion that consuming meat is morally wrong. Explanatory reasons give us insight into the psychological states of an agent but do not necessarily shed light on the actual rightness or wrongness of an action or attitude.[77]

The enterprise of reason-giving in moral disagreement is centered on justificatory reasons, but justificatory reasons were few and far between in the focus sessions. Many of the participants would state facts without explaining or being able to explain (when pressed) how those facts justified their beliefs that meat-eating is permissible. To put it generously, the "in-between" steps were missing. To put it more harshly, the arguments were incoherent. In a discussion on what constitutes moral standing and which animals have it, the unreflective meat-eaters continually cited facts about differences between humans and animals but could not argue why these differences were *morally* relevant.

> Chloe [In response to Jamie's remark that humans are just more intrinsically valuable "on some grand scale."]: What is it about humans that give them this value and why don't animals have it? ...
>
> Louis: I think one of the coolest things that I believe separates us from the beasts would be that we decided to change. We were hunter-gatherers and we decided one day that we're just gonna sit down and start farming and domesticating

[76] Lenman, James. "Reasons for Action: Justification Vs. Explanation." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. Winter, 2011. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/.

[77] However, explanatory reasons can line up with justificatory reasons. For example,

animals, building cities instead of wandering from place to place. No animals have really done that.

Jamie: And a lot of being in agrarian society comes from civil law so part of being in society comes from governing ourselves. However you see it, we govern ourselves with a set of rules that applies to human beings, specifically human beings because there is a distinction between human nature and animalistic nature.

Chloe: Even if we do grant those differences between "human nature" and "animal nature," how is that relevant grounds for differences in moral standing?

Vince: Because we can eliminate every other species on the face of the earth and it's not the other way around. I'm not saying it's right, but might does make right. If we didn't kick Hitler's ass, who knows what would have happened?

Once, my little brother's friend Thorin demolished about half of the toys we kept in our basement. When my mom asked him why he did that, he answered "I was cold." This reason was unsatisfactory because it *neither* explained nor justified his actions—it was just a fact. Obviously the "facts" offered above are not completely unrelated to questions about the moral status of animals, but saying "humans are different from animals because we have agriculture" is importantly different from "agricultural capabilities are what determine the moral statuses of humans and animals" and leaves one with the same dissatisfaction as Thorin's response. [78] The former claim is defensible, but the latter is not.

In this section, I have shown a number of ways in which meat evades morality:

1) People perceive a general rift between the domain of morality and everyday life such that ethical decisions become "personal choices" where anything can be "justified" through vicious circular reasoning.
2) Animals, as they make the ambiguous transition from beings to beef, lose their moral valence.
3) People give explanatory reasons for their behavior in lieu of justificatory reasons, which are the currency of moral discourse.

Meat, thus, avoids moralization, sweeping the conflict between human and animal desires under the rug.

[78] I put scare quotes around *facts* because I am hesitant to call Louis's account of the Neolithic revolution entirely factual.

3.4 The Naturalistic Fallacy

Most participants ultimately agreed that consuming industrial meat is morally wrong, although quite a few planned to continue doing so anyway, a point to which I will later return. The discussions then turned to ethically-raised meat. Engaging the participants in a discussion about weighing the desires of farm animals to live against the desires of humans to eat them proved unsuccessful because, again, meat-eating “escaped” the domain of the *moral*—this time finding solace in the domain of the *natural*.

I put “escape” in scare quotes because, by confining meat-eating to the domain of the natural, one is implicitly deducing the moral from the natural. In other words, when one participant answered “no” to whether deciding to eat meat is a moral decision, he explained it as, “I believe…that humans are physiologically designed to consume meat, and therefore the consumption of meat is not a moral question any more than a tiger eating meat is.” Another participant who answered “no” said “I think consuming meat is just nature.” Comments like “there’s a natural way of doing things” and “animals have their place in our world and so I think it’s morally okay to kill an animal” cropped up frequently, from thirteen different participants. These remarks imply that what is *natural* is *right* in virtue of its being natural.

Philosophers call this the “naturalistic fallacy.” The term “naturalistic fallacy” comes from G.E. Moore’s Open Question Argument, in which he argues that, for any analysis of a moral term in terms of non-moral terms, there will always be a question as to whether the non-moral term really is what the moral term is.[79] Basically, you cannot analyze a moral property in terms of non-moral properties. This is related to the is/ought gap, which says that no moral statement can be validly inferred from a consistent set of non-moral premises. In plainer language, you can’t get an *ought* from an *is*! Instead of articulating the naturalistic fallacy through an argument in standard form, I will show how committing this logical fallacy can lead to some dangerous pitfalls. To do this, I will show how replacing the variable “X” in the fallacious argument below with examples of natural acts leads to conclusions we surely do not wish to accept.

P1: X is natural.
P2: What is natural is morally right.
C: X is morally right.

If we replace “X” with heterosexuality, one could argue that, by taking the counterfactual, homosexuality is wrong because it is not natural. It is not a big jump from Michael’s proclamation that our bodies are “created to eat meat” to “our bodies are created to have heterosexual intercourse.” Similar arguments can be run for, say, violence. A plausible

[79] Moore, G.E. “§13.” In *Principia Ethica*. Prometheus Books, 1903. http://fair-use.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica.

argument can be made that violence is natural (we see violent tendencies in children, we associate violence with our animal natures, etc.). If violence is natural, then it is also good. Surely we would not want to say this. Perhaps an even more dramatic example will drive this point home. Infanticide is found in human societies and animal populations alike as an effective means of "sex allocation."[80] In hunter-gatherer societies, it was prevalent and direct, but most of its modern-day manifestations are forms of "deferred infanticide" (premature weaning, for example). Does the fact that infanticide is "natural" make it right? No. This example also problematizes the derivation of what ought to be from what is natural by highlighting the ambiguity of "natural." What Moore meant by "natural" in the naturalistic fallacy is any property that can be studied by the natural sciences, but the argument I laid out above uses "natural" in a narrower sense and is probably equivocating a few distinct senses of "natural," such as "genetically determined," "occurring independent of human intervention," and "inborn." One worry here is that something can be thought of as natural in virtue of the fact that we—"natural" creatures—do it. Alternatively, if we conceive ourselves as outside of nature, then nothing we do is "natural!" The term loses whatever significance it has either way. Not only is the naturalistic fallacy a logical fallacy that can lead us to perilous conclusions, but also the very construct of "natural" is problematic as a starting point.

The naturalistic fallacy did not crop up only in discussions about the ethics of meat consumption. The vegan group, although firm in their conviction that eating meat is wrong, had just as strong of a tendency to commit the naturalistic fallacy in other areas of ethics. For example, in order to "test" the coherence of their beliefs, I raised an argument for predator extermination. Tyler Cowen argues that insofar as we believe we should minimize animal suffering, we should intervene into predator prey relationships, at least in no-cost/low-risk situations by reducing subsidies to carnivores, for example.[81] We intervene in order to improve the lives of animals all the time, regardless of whether their suffering was human-induced. People make huge efforts to help beached whales, we protect sea turtle hatchlings from predators as they journey to the ocean, and we provide treatment for injured wild animals, so why not intervene to protect prey? The fact that predators are not moral agents (capable of moral decision-making) is not relevant. Cowen uses the example of a deranged person about to go on a killing spree and asks if we should stop them if stopping them meant killing them. Regardless of whether this person is a moral agent, we should indeed stop them! Cowen's argument is both quite convincing and counter-intuitive, so watching the participants struggle

[80] Hausfater, Glenn. "Infanticide: Comparative and Evolutionary Perspectives." *Current Anthropology* 25, no. 4 (1984): 500–502.

[81] Cowen, Tyler. "Policing Nature." *Environmental Ethics* 25 (2003): 169–182.

to rectify their intuitions with the reasons Cowen provided in favor of protecting prey was very interesting. Jenny, for example, struggles with the question of intervention:

> Well I guess I believe that life takes life and that's just like a fact of this world… I also think that generally what I find to be morally right is the order, the natural universe, so basically I think that the predator prey thing is natural and that's just what should happen. It's how the earth functions, and it's interesting because humans are these beings and we're at the top of the food chain because of our brains and the influence we've created for ourselves. I get tripped up about all of that because predator-prey that's like what's natural. It's just what it is, but then like it's completely impossible for humans to live in that world. In this day and age, it's really hard for any of us to go and say, I want to live in this natural setting. It really confuses me…

Jenny's comment here is very insightful. She might get tripped up because she is holding something like the following:

1) What is natural is right. ("What I find to be morally right is the natural universe.")
2) What is not natural is not right. (by counterposition of 1)
3) Predator-prey is natural.
4) Intervention is not natural.
5) Not intervening in nature is impossible. ("It's completely impossible for humans to live in that world.")

So, intervention is not right, but it happens all the time.

This leaves her with the dismal conclusion that nothing is right. Surely, Jenny would not want to accept that. Instead, she should deny (1) and (4). She should deny (1) because of the naturalistic fallacy and (4) because her concept of nature is problematic in that it is limited so as not to include humans. Among all groups, participants showed a strong attachment to the idea of an "Earth in balance." For the meat-eaters, an "Earth in balance" also entailed humans occupying the "top of the food chain." The strength of their convictions in these fallacious arguments was fascinating as well as disturbing. It was fascinating because of how tightly they held onto these convictions despite a lack of convincing reasons, and it was disturbing because of the dangerous consequences laid out above. In Chapter 13, I give a potential psychological explanation for this observation, but there are sociological and historical dimensions that would be interesting to explore in the future as well.

3.5 Can Philosophy Change Minds?

The question that I sought to answer through this empirical research was:

Can a brief, deliberative experience that facilitates confrontation between ethics, science, and practice lead to a change in beliefs and/or behavior?

As I mentioned in Chapter 12, I optimistically predicted that the power of reason would prevail. I thought that even if people rejected the specific ethical framework that I endorse, the conclusion that we ought to be treating animals better than we actually treat animals would rationally follow from their own implicit ethical frameworks. For the most part, it did not, but to say this would be to misrepresent the level of sophistication in our discussions around ethics. The entire enterprise of reason-giving in moral discourse was drastically different in these focus groups than in a philosophy class. Learning to recognize and understand the participants' reasons and justifications for their beliefs and behavior forced me to acknowledge my own situated-ness in the tradition of analytic philosophy. Before I take this step back, though, I will relay the "before & after" results and discuss some preliminary implications.

The results are summarized in Table 12.1 and Table 12.2 below.

Participant	Group	Do you think that deciding whether or not to eat meat is a moral decision? BEFORE	Do you think that deciding whether or not to eat meat is a moral decision? AFTER	Do you think cows can experience happiness? BEFORE	Do you think cows can experience happiness? AFTER	Since your final focus session, have you eaten more or less animal products?	Would you like to stop eating meat?	Have any of your beliefs about ethics in general changed as a result of this study?	Did you learn anything new about the meat industry as a result of this study?	Have any of your beliefs about meat-eating changed as a result of this study?	Total Less Meat Consumption (Consumption BEFORE-Consumption AFTER)
Rodney	Unreflective	No	No	Yes	Yes	same	No	Yes	Yes		4
Vince	Unreflective	No	No	Not sure	Yes	same	No	Slightly	No	No	-3
Louis	Unreflective	No	No	No	No	same	No	No	Slightly	No	2
Marcus	Unreflective	No	No	Yes	Not sure	same	No	No	Yes	No	3.5
Holly	Reflective	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	same	Not sure	NA	Yes	No	3
Joel	Reflective	Yes	No	Not sure	No	same	No	No	No	No	-9
Matt	Reflective	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	same	No	No	No	No	2
Weston	Reflective	No	Yes	Yes	Not sure	same	Not sure	No	No	No	-4
Michael	Reflective/Mixed	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	less	No	Slightly	No	No	1.5
Jenny	Reflective/Mixed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	same	No	No	No	No	-1.5
Shaun	Reflective/Mixed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not sure	same	No	No	No	No	0
Nick	Reflective/Mixed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	less	Not sure	No	Slightly	Slightly	5.5
Ruben	Vegan/Mixed	NA	Yes	NA	Yes	same	NA	No	Slightly	No	0
Beth	Vegan/Mixed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not sure	same	NA	Slightly	No	No	0
Shelly	Vegan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	same	NA	No	No	No	0
Nicole	Vegan	Yes	Yes	Not sure	Not sure	same	NA	No	No	No	0
Simon	Vegan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	same	NA	No	No	No	0
James	Vegan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	same	NA	No	No	No	0

Table 12.1 Results from Before & After Surveys. Blue text indicates change in beliefs in the direction that was intended, and red indicates a change in beliefs in the opposite direction. The questions about changes in beliefs about meat consumption, ethics, and the meat industry were originally open-ended questions. I summarized them into "yes," "no," or "slightly" in order to display the data most clearly. Change in overall meat consumption is a function of five questions asking participants how many times in the last week/on average (before survey) and in the last week/last month (after survey) participants had had certain types of meat. None of the changes reached statistical significance because of a low N value, but two changes are close to statistical significance. 1) The unreflective group reported eating less meat after the study than before (p=.172, binomial sign test, N=4), and 2) participants were more skeptical about cow happiness after the study than before (p=.109, binomial sign test, N=17).

	How important is having ethically consistent beliefs to you?	How consistent do you think your beliefs are?	How much did the study challenge the consistency of your beliefs?	Since the final focus session, how conscientious have you been about where your meat is sourced from?	What do you think the likelihood is that you will drastically change your meat consumption habits in the future based on ethical considerations?
Unreflective (N=4)	6.3	5.8	2	3.5	1.8
Reflective (N=8)	5.4	5.3	2	4.6	3.5
Vegan (N=6)	6.2	5.7	3.2	NA	1

Table 22.2 Attitudes Among Different Groups. These are the mean values on a Likert scale in response to these questions from the follow-up survey. Low N values, high standard deviations, and a non-random sample prevent drawing inferential conclusions about differences between the unreflective, reflective, and vegan groups. A future study with an expanded sample size would enable us to draw more meaningful conclusions.

For the most part, participants reported little to no changes in their beliefs. While there were some changes in actual consumption patterns, none of these trends reached statistical significance.

While my optimism was generally met with disappointment in the power of reason, I would hesitate to answer my original research question with a straight-up "no" for a few reasons. First, I am disinclined to take all of the participants at their word when they say that they experienced no change in beliefs, learned nothing new, and the consistency of their ethical frameworks was not that challenged (a 2.4 average on a Likert scale). I asked if they "learned anything new about the meat industry as a result of this study," to which twelve participants replied that they did not, three said they learned a little, and only two said they learned something. Considering the fact that we took a survey about the meat industry, went over all of the answers together, and nobody got a perfect score (most people did not get close), it seems implausible that the vast majority learned nothing at all. If the participants were inaccurate in reporting how much they learned in one category, there is *some* reason to believe they are also mistaken in reporting how much their ethical beliefs, beliefs about animals, and beliefs about meat consumption changed.

When I took an introductory ethics course during my freshman year, I came in with what I would have called strong moral principles. I left the class, though, with profoundly different views than I had when I started. It takes a certain epistemic modesty that an eighteen-year-old college freshmen is probably more likely to have than a fifty-three-year-old contractor to remain open to changing one's ethical beliefs, which seem to play a powerful role in identity. A less speculative account of what makes someone more or less susceptible to changing their moral convictions is beyond the scope of this analysis but would prove useful in interpreting my

data. I suspect, though, that most participants did not enter the study with the appropriate epistemic attitude, which is admittedly difficult to achieve considering the "high stakes" of morality—nobody wants to think they are an immoral person.

A second reason that I hesitate to answer my research question with a flat "no" is that although the participants reported minimal lasting changes in beliefs and behavior, they were extremely engaged in the focus sessions and genuinely intellectually curious, perhaps with the exception of the reflective group. The unreflective and mixed groups in particular asked questions of each other and of myself, engaged in spirited and respectful debate, and reported enjoying the experience of hearing other people's views. Actually, every single participant said that participating was a positive experience and all but two requested a copy of my completed thesis. While these open-minded attitudes and responses do not constitute a change in belief or behavior in the sense I intended in my research question, they are a good start. You can only get so far in five hours.

3.6 Logic Can Be a Bummer[82]

In the final focus session with the unreflective meat-eaters, I gave an argument for animal welfare by making an analogy to an argument against racism from John Rawls' "veil of ignorance."[83] It is worth recounting this discussion at length:

> Chloe: You are a being about to come onto the earth, and you have the power to decide what kind of world you're going to enter. You can design the world however you want. There is a catch, though: you are under a so-called "veil of ignorance," which basically means you do not know what race you will be when you enter. So, what kind of world would you design?
>
> Wade: For me, it wouldn't really matter. I'd set things up like how I feel now where it wouldn't really matter whether someone's a different race than me. I really wouldn't care.
>
> Vince: But doesn't that all pretty much reach a logical conclusion when you say 'well there's black and white and yellow. I want everybody to get along and have equal rights because I don't know if I'm gonna be black, white, or yellow?' Am I right?

[82] Credit for this title is due to my fifteen-year-old brother who said "logic is a bummer" as his response to the content in this chapter.

[83] Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1971.

> Chloe: Yes that's exactly the argument. From behind the veil of ignorance, you would want to design a world such that there is racial equality.

At this point I made sure everyone got the argument and was on the same page before extending it to animals:

> Chloe: So, that was in terms of race, but now I want to apply this not just to race but to species. You could say, 'what kind of world would I design in terms of the different species' relationships with one another not knowing which species I would be a member of?'
>
> Vince: Ohhhh, you can't change your argument now! …if you don't know if you're gonna be a human being or a chimpanzee or a milk cow then you would make them all have good lives in case you end up as a milk cow.
>
> C: Great job, Vince—you stole my thunder!
>
> Vince: Well that's an interesting argument….Now you're just getting down to logic and saying 'A therefore B, add C and D… I can sit down and use that argument with my drinking buddy tonight—he's sick of me talking about this stuff anyway—but I can say, 'I know how to make you never eat a hamburger again if you agree with this line of thinking' and then I'll give the argument you just gave and he'll go, 'it's a trick! You sucked me in!'…yeah that's pretty interesting. I'm gonna home and think about all this and who knows? In six months I'll be…
>
> Rodney: eating tofu?
>
> [laughter]
>
> Vince: [laughing] Well maybe [I'll be] eating fish instead of beef.

Anyone recall what Vince's follow-up survey indicated? He reported eating the same amount of chicken and animal byproducts and *more* pork and beef than he reported in the screening survey he took prior to the study. How could it be that the "logical argument" that I "so cleverly clobbered [him] with" did not translate into action?

As I have already alluded, understanding the relationships between moral judgments, reasons, motivation, and action is critical to interpreting these results. These results, in turn, can also inform our understanding of moral discourse and action. Take the relationship

between moral judgment and motivation, for example. Any account of a moral judgment will have to explain the tight link between making a moral judgment and being motivated to act in accordance with that judgment.

Vince seemed to accept the conclusion that we ought to treat animals well, but his actions did not accord with this moral judgment. I can conceive of a few possible explanations for his stance:

1a) He accepted the moral judgment, but it did not give him a reason to act.
1b) He accepted the moral judgment but had stronger reasons to act otherwise.
2a) He accepted the moral judgment, but it gave him no motivation to act.
2b) He accepted the moral judgment but had stronger motivation to act otherwise.

The first two possibilities (1a & 1b) concern the debate between reasons internalists and reasons externalists, and the latter possibilities (2a & 2b) concern motivation internalism versus motivation externalism. Reasons internalism is the conceptual claim that moral considerations necessarily provide agents reasons for action.[84] Motivation internalism is the conceptual claim that, necessarily, if someone recognizes a moral fact, then they are motivated.[85] These are conceptual claims, but there are also empirical claims about the connection between moral judgment and motivation such as "moral judgments are accompanied by affective states" or "moral judgments are more likely to motivate when they concern the welfare of family members or friends as opposed to strangers."

Empirical work cannot verify or prove these conceptual claims, but it can refute them. If, for example, it turns out that there is such a person who makes a moral judgment but has no motivation, then motivation internalism is false.[86] Empirical work, though, is valuable in itself for what it tells us about how moral judgments work in this world—the actual world.

It may strike us as strange that Vince would come to the conclusion that we ought to be treating animals better than we actually do, yet continue to act in a way that is inconsistent with that judgment. Motivation internalists might argue that he is not making a genuine moral judgment, whereas externalists could point to something in his psychology that explains why the typical link between judgment and motivation is missing. Theoretically, internalists and externalists could find answers in this empirical data. For example, internalists might point to the fact that Vince, in his follow-up survey, said that meat-eating is not an ethical decision as evidence that he was not making a genuine moral judgment. Externalists might take a closer look at what else is going on psychologically to show that he has a defect that can explain the

[84] This is the most plausible form of reasons internalism, agent internalism, which says that the truth of a moral fact (rather than the recognition of that moral fact) is what gives reason for action.
[85] This is the most plausible form of motivation internalism, appraiser internalism, which says that the recognition of a moral fact (rather than the truth of that moral fact) is what motivates.
[86] Some have argued that the existence of psychopaths proves that internalism is false.

lack of a connection between motivation and action. For example, Vince wrote in his follow-up survey as his explanation for why meat-eating is not an ethical decision:

> Muslims hate pork. In India cows run free. Here, in the states we detest horse meat. Etc. I fail to see the direct link between my eating chicken meat and the suffering that almost certainly goes on in chicken farms…or feed lots.

The externalist could claim that the incomprehensibility of these "reasons" and his failure to understand the consequences of his actions point to a psychological defect that explains why his moral judgment did not motivate him to action.

I am not sure as to who would win this debate in the context of Vince's judgment and motivation, but it is noteworthy that this empirical evidence gives us ammunition for important debates like that between empirical motivation internalism and externalism.

Another important metaethical question that this empirical data could inform concerns the respective roles of Kantian reason versus Humean "passion" or intuition in making moral judgments. In the remainder of this section, I will explain the phenomenon of moral dumbfounding and the support it offers for the theory that moral judgment and moral reasoning are two independent psychological processes. I will then argue that some of the participants' comments suggest moral dumbfounding is at play and offer support for this dual cognition theory.

Haidt et al. (2002) describe moral dumbfounding as "the stubborn and puzzled maintenance of a judgment without supporting reasons" or "when intuition finds no reason." [87][88] When the passions point in the opposite direction as reason, which wins out? Hume famously answered, "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions," but is this how we see ourselves making moral decisions? Based on our "gut feelings" rather than our reasoning capabilities?

Interestingly, what people think about moral judgment can have an impact on conceptual claims about moral judgment as well as empirical claims. To demonstrate this, I will first differentiate between conceptual claims and empirical claims then assess the impact of this empirical data on both.

Conceptual claims about moral judgments are claims about what moral judgments are and how they work in all possible worlds. We arrive at these claims through conceptual

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[87] Haidt, Jonathan, Fredrik Bjorklund, and Scott Murphy. "Moral Dumbfounding: When Intuition Finds No Reason" (2010). Awaiting publication. http://commonsenseatheism.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Haidt-Moral-Dumfounding-When-Intuition-Finds-No-Reason.pdf.

[88] Haidt et al. have a broad conception of "intuition" which includes "a variety of automatic and uncontrollable cognitive processes, including emotional appraisals and automatic processes which are largely outside the control of consciousness and independent of reasoning."

analysis. There are a number of conceptions of the project of conceptual analysis, but for the purposes of this section, I will use Michael Smith's:

> An analysis of a concept is successful just in case it gives us knowledge of all and only the platitudes which are such that, by coming to treat those platitudes as platitudinous, we come to have mastery of that concept.[89]

In order to find out which platitudes our concept of moral judgment must account for, Smith first asks which platitudes surrounding our moral concepts ordinary, competent speakers of the language hold. Conceptual claims must be consistent with these platitudes. Take, for example, the rationalist conceptual claim about morality, as formulated here by Shaun Nichols in *Sentimenental Rules*: "it is part of our concept of morality that moral requirements are requirements of reason."[90] This is consistent with the platitudes surrounding morality that Smith identifies, such as "Judgments about rightness and wrongness are judgments about our reasons for and against acting" and "Whether or not ϕ-ing is right can be discovered by engaging in rational argument."[91] If we adopt Smith's model of conceptual analysis, then it becomes important whether competent speakers of the language actually do hold these as platitudinous. Smith makes assumptions about what those who have mastery of moral concepts believe, but why not ask actual ordinary speakers which platitudes they hold? If Smith claims that x, y, and z are platitudes about moral judgments, but most people do not hold x, y, and z as platitudinous, then they are not platitudes after all. If, say, philosophers like Smith and non-philosophers hold different platitudes surrounding moral judgment as platitudinous, then this presents a challenge either to Smith's moral concepts or to his method of conceptual analysis.

Identifying the platitudes surrounding moral judgment is, at least in some sense, an empirical project. If analyzing moral judgments involves these platitudes, and platitudes are what they are because they are held as platitudinous by competent speakers, then conceptual analysis relies on empirical data—data about the concepts of moral judgment that actual competent speakers have.

Empirical claims about moral judgments, on the other hand, are claims about what moral judgments are and how they work in this world— the actual world. It may be that our concept of moral judgments is distinct from how moral judgments actually work.[92] For example, the rationalist conceptual claim may be true while the empirical claim is false. In other words, we may believe, as part of our concept of morality, that moral judgments are grounded

[89] Smith, Michael. *The Moral Problem*. 1st ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 1994, 31.

[90] Nichols, Shaun. *Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2004, 71.

[91] Smith, *The Moral Problem*, 39-40

[92] Both Smith and Nichols make this distinction.

in reason, when in fact, the psychological processes involved in making actual "moral judgments" are affective and unconscious rather than rational and conscious.[93] The impact of empirical work on empirical claims is more straightforward. For example, to show that the empirical rationalist claim, which says that "the psychological capacities underlying moral judgment are rational mechanisms," is false, we can cite empirical evidence that our moral judgments are strongly influenced by affective states rather than rational ones.[94]

Contrary to my expectations, there was a high amount of variation in how participants *thought* they made ethical decisions. On one end of the spectrum, there were the participants who professed to use reason and reason alone. Take James, whose decision to become vegan, you will recall, was made based on a "logical argument" from Peter Singer which also motivated him to switch his major to Philosophy. Here, he recounts a time when he had to make an ethical decision:

> The way I dealt with that moral dilemma was to suspend judgment much like a juror in a courtroom, take note of some evidence, and then deliberate a little bit and stop deliberating and then go a long time before drawing a conclusion that I stuck with.

The other end of the spectrum—the "intuition" side— actually claimed more followers than the "reasoning" side among the participants. Greg, for example, described how he determines what a virtuous life is: "it's kind of how I feel about it in the long-run. If I feel that it's wrong, then it's probably wrong." Nicole also thought that her "feelings" gave her insight into morality: "there are things that I agree with, that kind of feel right to me...I kind of have a felt sense." In response to this comment, I later asked Nicole, a vegan, how she would go about settling a moral disagreement with a meat-eater who "just feels" differently than she does about animal suffering. She said, "I don't know if you do solve it. It happens, and I wish it didn't. End of story..." These "intuition" responses are inconsistent not just with some of Smith's platitudes but with *many* of them.[95] This presents a challenge to either our moral concepts or Smith's project of conceptual analysis. Would it be fair to claim that Nicole and Greg are incompetent speakers? While this option may seem like a nice way out of this problem, it quickly becomes unappealing when considering how many people we would have to deem incompetent speakers. All but five of the 21 participants made at least one statement about their moral concepts that violated one of Smith's platitudes.[96] It is probably significant that two of those five non-violators were the two that studied philosophy in college, but such a low sample size

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[93] *Moral judgments* is in scare quotes because if the conceptual rational claim is true and the empirical rational claim is false, then we may never actually make *true* moral judgments (judgments grounded in reason) even if we still take ourselves to be making moral judgments.
[94] Nichols
[95] Specifically, they are inconsistent with procedural, practical, and objective platitudes around morality.
[96] Most also made contradictory statements that did accord with Smith's platitudes.

of philosophers relative to non-philosophers cannot support any broader conclusions about differences in moral concepts between philosophers and non-philosophers. This potential difference would be worth pursuing in further research.[97]

These comments from James, Nicole, and Greg regard how we *think* we make moral decisions, but what we *think* a moral judgment is (the conceptual claim) may in fact be quite distinct from, or perhaps even unrelated to, how our *actual* moral judgments work (the empirical claim). The next section explains an empirical claim, the claim that our moral judgments are based on intuition rather than reason. Before evaluating the empirical data from my study in light of the social intuitionist model, I will follow Haidt et al. in using the phenomenon of moral dumbfounding to support the social intuitionist model over a rationalist model of moral judgment.

Recall the question with which we began our inquiry into moral judgments: when the passions point in the opposite direction as reason, which wins out? Hume famously answered, "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions," but Kant privileged the role of human reason in moral judgment. Haidt et al.'s moral dumbfounding study supports the theory that our moral judgments are based on Humean intuitions, and Kantian reasoning only plays an ex post facto role. Or, as one vegan participant cynically put it, "we all do pretty much whatever we want and then we find a reason to justify it." Haidt et al. draw an analogy between the independent processes of judgment and reasoning and a president who makes decisions that have to be explained by his press secretary who has not even spoken to him. Haidt et al. follow Nisbett and Wilson (1977) in claiming that people do not have introspective access to the cognitive processes involved in making moral judgments.[98] The press secretary does not know why the president made the decision he did, but she has to justify it somehow so she overlays it with reasons that will satisfy the press (and make the president look good…). Our moral judgments are based on intuition, and reasoning only comes in ex post facto—we make decisions and then "guess" why we made them.

Haidt et al. created four stories that were designed to pit reason against intuition in order to test their hypothesis that moral judgment precedes and is independent from moral reasoning. They used a classic moral reasoning case where judgments can easily be explained by reasoning as the control. One of these "moral intuition" stories, for example, was about a brother and sister who had consensual, protected sex on a camping trip. They both enjoyed it but decided not to do it again and to keep it a secret. When participants were asked, "was it wrong for them to have sex?" they insisted, "I know it's wrong, but I just can't come up with a reason why." This sounds just like the press secretary who knows the president made a certain

[97] Shaun Nichols and Joshua Knobe also acknowledge the need for empirical studies that compare intuitions between philosophers and non-philosophers in:

Knobe, Joshua, and Nichols, Shaun. *Experimental Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

[98] Nisbett, Richard, and Timothy Wilson. "Telling More Than We Can Know: Verbal Reports on Mental Processes" 84 (1977): 231–259.

decision but does not know why. In this example and in the other "intuition" stories, participants made more "unsupported declarations" and reported "relying more on 'gut' than reason" than in the control story.[99]

Haidt et al. argue that these results support Margolis' (1987) theory that "human cognition usually involves a quick, intuitive 'seeing-that' followed by a critical, ex post facto 'reasoning-why' in order to explain why one came to the conclusions one did."[100] The "seeing-that" component is evolutionarily ancient and usually takes precedence over the more-recently-evolved "reasoning-why." When these systems conflict, moral dumbfounding occurs, thus evidencing their independence.

I did not design my study with the goal of putting reason in direct conflict with intuition, but the meat-eating case elicited responses that fit the bill of moral dumbfounding in many participants. There were a few very salient comments like: "Obviously I value human life [more than animal life], but I'm not sure why I do." In most cases, though, intuition did not find *no* reasons, but it found pretty lousy ones. Giving bad reasons is weaker evidence for moral dumbfounding than giving no reasons at all, but giving bad reasons is still consistent with the social intuitionist model.

When I asked the participants for *reasons* to support their beliefs about meat-eating, most of them had a difficult time articulating *why* they believed what they did. They relied on unspecific concepts like "intrinsic value" and "karma" in unsupported declarations to explain why animals and humans should be treated differently. To be clear, I do believe animals and humans should be valued differently, but the reasons given by some of the participants for this judgment were quite vague relative to the strength of their conviction, which may suggest that reasoning is happening ex post facto. Jamie, for example, felt very strongly that humans are "on a different level" than animals. I consistently pressed him and other participants to tell me what it is about humans or animals that set them apart and why those differences are morally relevant. He replied with,

> Humans have intrinsic value...humans and animals are different in all, or most, respects. Sure, animals can have reactions, an animal might have feelings, but it's still an animal and that's sort of its place in our world and so I think it's morally okay to kill an animal...The fact of slaughtering [animals] for food is okay in my construct...I don't weigh my personal gain versus the feeling of an animal. *It's more that I just think it's morally okay to slaughter animals for food so that's how I see it* in general.

Instead of giving independent reasons to support why he thinks "it's morally okay to slaughter animals," he cites the fact that he thinks it is okay as if it were evidence. These are the sort of

[99] Haidt et al., "Moral Dumbfounding: When Intuition Finds No Reason."
[100] Haidt et al., "Moral Dumbfounding: When Intuition Finds No Reason."

"unsupported declarations" that Haidt et al. take to be evidence for moral dumbfounding. Vince gives a similarly lackluster justification for the moral acceptability of meat-eating:

> To a certain degree, I don't know if it's a Buddhist attitude or what, but you think about this karma and whatnot and cultures like Buddhism kind of look at animals that are going to be slaughtered for food as if [the animals] kind of know that's in store [for them]...The animal kind of knows that it's part of the food chain. You have to accept the fact that animals are raised for food and killed. It's semi-religious. I'm not too sure about it.

Does Vince really buy what he is saying here? His dubious "reasons" and his overt statement of confusion at the end, especially, indicate moral dumbfounding. Two final examples, the first from Michael and the second from Jamie, will prove especially illustrative:

> *Maybe this is the justification that I've created*, but I feel that any other species, anything alive on the planet,—there's thousands of them that eat other animals.
>
> Eating meat is sort of part of what human beings do. It's natural. *However you want to justify it*, it's what we do. Most humans eat food, and so we're going to continue to do that.

Justifying an act by the fact that we act that way is viciously circular. Any act could be justified this way! Participants were stubborn in their insistence that slaughtering animals is permissible, but their supporting reasons fell short. Almost no one was able to point to differences between humans and animals *and* argue that those differences are morally relevant. In these cases, the intuition that eating meat is morally acceptable could find only bad reasons or no reasons at all, lending support to the social intuitionist model.

Systematically coding and quantifying "intuition" responses versus "reasoning" responses would yield a better understanding of how moral judgments around meat-eating are formed. While this rigorous analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, I do think that the above examples are consistent with the social intuitionist model. The evidence provides some support that the social intuitionist model is superior to the rationalist model, but also, the social intuitionist model can help make sense of what might otherwise be confusing empirical data. If the empirical rationalist claim, that "the psychological capacities underlying moral judgment are rational mechanisms," was true, then how could someone possibly be making a moral judgment, yet be unable to give the rationale behind the judgment? Also, if a significant number of people are holding bad reasons (ex. viciously circular ones), we owe an explanation as to why so many people have fallen into error. The social intuitionist model can explain this better than the rationalist model. If the judgment that eating meat is morally permissible is grounded in intuition where reasoning only enters ex post facto, then it is not surprising that

the reasons offered in support of this claim are insufficient and do not explain the judgment.[101] If, however, the judgment that eating meat is morally permissible is grounded in reason, then it would seem odd that so many people's reasons are incoherent, circular, or vague.

This section has addressed the need for a better understanding of the relationships between reason, motivation, moral judgment, and action in order to interpret these data. I suggested that these data *support and are supported by* a dual cognition theory that posits an initial "seeing-as" or intuitive reaction that is overlaid with "reasoning-why" ex post facto. This kind of "ethical opportunism" helps explain why participants relied on such poor reasons or no reasons at all to support their disproportionately strong convictions about the ethics of meat consumption.

In the following chapter, I will return to the divide between the ethical experts and everyone else that I addressed in Section 1.1.

[101] It makes sense that we would have the intuition that eating meat is morally acceptable. As Margolis points out, the "seeing-as" component is evolutionarily ancient—it is there to help us survive. Now, let's think about what we might have needed to survive throughout most of our evolutionary history… Meat! If we did not *see* meat-eating *as* a good thing to do, we might not have done so well in terms of fitness. It makes evolutionary sense that we would have that intuition about meat-eating, not to mention that it is psychologically convenient to believe that what we are already doing is the *right* thing to do.

4. Missed Steaks and Moral Stakes

4.1 Engaging the Estranged— Experts and Everyone Else

People can drive their cars just fine with very little knowledge of physics, eat their vegetables without knowing a thing about horticulture, and follow the plot of *West Side Story* having never studied *Romeo & Juliet*. Ignorance in these areas is just fine, but, if it is the case—as I observed—that people are making ethical decisions with little knowledge of ethics, then we have major cause for concern considering how many moral decisions we make (ex. who to vote for in the GOP primaries, whether to visit one's loathsome aunt in her nursing home, whether to bike or drive to work, etc.). Not only are people ill-equipped to reason about ethics (i.e. the naturalistic fallacy), they often do not even take themselves to be making ethical decisions in the first place (as I showed in *Moralizing Meat*).

Engaging in basic moral discourse with the participants proved much more difficult than I had anticipated. A basic framework and understanding of moral terminology was missing from most of the participants such that, at times, it was as if we were arguing in different languages. The disconnect between the way that ethicists understand morality and the way that average people understand morality could be worrisome since it is not the ethicists who are making most of the ethical decisions.

In writing the theoretical portion of my thesis, I concentrated on the issues that I judged to be most critical to the argument that we ought to be treating animals better than we actually treat animals. For example, I devoted a considerable amount of time to arguing for animal minds and animal desires in particular. I tackled this argument from historical, philosophical, and ethological perspectives, but was all of that work even necessary? Of the 220 people who took the screening survey, 63% believed that cows experience happiness, 26% were not sure, and only 9% said no. Give this survey to a group of philosophers, and I bet we would be met with much more skepticism. Almost all philosophers accept that animals have minds these days, but skepticism about specific mental states including emotions (like happiness) and desires still lingers. In my focus groups, on the other hand, there were only a total of three or four participants that had significant reservations about attributing emotional states to animals. There was no skepticism about animal pain.

The naturalistic fallacy, on the other hand, is something against which I never would have thought to argue had it not been for this empirical research. Ink continues to be spilled over the naturalistic fallacy in the way Moore conceived of it, but the narrower and viciously circular conception of the naturalistic fallacy ("what is natural is right") cannot be respectably defended. The fact that the naturalistic fallacy was so prevalent among the participants does tell us *something* important, though. Even if philosophers do not think it is worth their time to return to the naturalistic fallacy, they ought to be asking why people are routinely and systematically mistaken about the naturalistic fallacy. I suggested that the naturalistic fallacy is

evidence for a dual cognition theory where a dubious moral principle overlays a preformed judgment, but this is only one of potentially many conceivable interesting explanations.

This is the sort of project that weaves together the normative and the empirical in which experimental philosophers are engaged. The fact that so many of the participants believed that what is natural is right in virtue of its being natural is not evidence for the truth of that judgment. Rather, that observation clues us into something important about how moral reasoning works, namely that an intuitive moral judgment is overlaid with reasoning ex post facto. This is *philosophically valuable* information that we discovered through empirical research. Empirical research impacted more than just empirical claims about moral judgment, though. Insofar as conceptual claims are determined based on the usage of terms by ordinary, competent speakers of the language, it matters what actual people (outside of a philosophy class) think moral judgment is. My data was inconsistent with the assumption that people take themselves to be using reason when making moral judgments, which challenges either the rationalist concept of moral judgments or certain methods of conceptual analysis.

A third way that the empirical informed the normative was more straightforward. Insofar as the universalizable moral theory I endorse depends on subjective desires as what comprise "good" for actual people and animals, it is important to know what actual people and animals desire! I proposed a method for weighing the desires of hypothetical people and animals, then I filled in the blanks with the desires of actual people—the participants in my focus groups. There is much more work to be done in order to better understand the desires of both people and animals around meat-eating, but I hope I have done enough to show why the project of weighing desires of people against animals is important and that I have provided a workable method for this weighing. Even if I have done enough to accomplish these goals, the reactions of my focus group participants to my normative argument demonstrates that this achievement falls short. Peter Singer's normative theory has not been enough to convince more than 3% of the American public, and mine did not fare so well amongst my sample of the public either, hence the importance of focusing on the deeper metaethical issues (i.e. conceptual and empirical claims about moral judgment) which I addressed above as well as the pragmatic implications of what *is* (determined empirically) versus what *ought* to be (determined through normative theory).

Pragmatically, this empirical information is valuable for a number of reasons. First, if we know where people are "getting it wrong," we know where to concentrate educational efforts. The participants' reliance on the naturalistic fallacy pushed me to sharpen my argument against it, for example, and their initial judgments that the animal suffering that goes on in factory farms is morally wrong caused me to focus energy away from arguments about animal pain and rebuttals to skepticism about what actually happens in factory farms to other issues that do concern the participants. The experience also yielded insight on which kinds of people are most receptive to these sorts of arguments. The unreflective group was far more open-minded than the reflective group, for example, with the vegans being slightly more open than the reflective group and the mixed group somewhere between the vegans and the unreflective group.

Intuitively, it makes sense that the group that has spent the least amount of time thinking about meat consumption would also be the group that is most open to engaging in a discussion about it, but further research would be needed to support this claim. One of the questions that my empirical research attempted to answer was, *Can philosophy change minds?* As I have already implied, the answer to this question is more complicated than a simple yes or no and opens the door to a ripe area for further research. If conclusive scientific discoveries do not motivate collective action to mitigate global climate change, then what will do the trick? In the future, I would like to focus attention to the possible ethical parallel: if convincing ethical theories do not motivate morally right action, then what will?

Another conclusion gleaned from the pragmatic value of this empirical research is that we ought to give serious consideration to bypassing agency for institutional change. If I, after five hours with each group of participants, had a difficult time even *engaging* with participants in moral discourse, then *convincing* them to change their moral judgments, or even their non-moral beliefs, was a challenge to say the least. As a matter of fact, although most of the change in beliefs and behavior from the participants was in the direction I intended, participants left feeling *more* skeptical about animal minds.[102] Maybe it is better to just let people make anthropomorphic judgments about their pets instead of trying to teach them how to engage in critical anthropomorphism and avoid problems of functional equivalence in evaluating animal behavior.

I still harbor hope for a world where people acknowledge the conflict between human and animal desires and respond to arguments for improved animal welfare from reason, but, in the meantime, we ought to be working for institutional change that benefits animals regardless of whether people make the correct moral judgments.[103]

4.2 Turning the Tables

Thus far, I have been critical of participants' moral reasoning abilities, their moral judgments, and disconnect between their moral judgments and actions, but it is only fair that I now turn the tables on myself, especially since the dual cognition theory that I argued for posits that we are not all that good at reasoning, which I have counted as my chief weapon. In this section, I will give two objections to myself. I do this for two reasons. First, these objections highlight my own situated-ness in analytic philosophy. Second, I feel obligated to share these objections for the sake of epistemic integrity.

[102] This is based on their before and after survey responses to the question, "Do you think cows experience happiness?" Five participants reported feeling more skeptical about cow happiness, only one reported feeling less skeptical, and the other eleven reported no change. This trend was close to reaching statistical significance with a P-value of .109 (N=17) from a binomial sign test.

[103] Even the participants who maintained that eating industrially produced meat is morally acceptable were largely in favor of institutional change. They voiced concern for lax health codes, they were dismayed to find out that farm animals were excluded under the Animal Welfare Act, etc.

In Chapter 5, I rely on the Humean action theory to show that animal behavior gives us insight into animal desires. The Humean action theory, you will recall, says that desires, and not merely beliefs, drive us to action. It follows that an animal's action is evidence of its desires rather than its beliefs.[104] The inability to figure out an animal's desires based on its behavior would be a methodological barrier that would probably prove disastrous for the theory I endorse.

When I combine the desire-satisfaction theory of value with a consequentialist theory of right action, I am arguing that people ought to do what produces the most good, regardless of their own interests. We ought to act against our own desires when satisfying them would doom a greater amount of someone else's desires. For Hume, this is incomprehensible because *ought implies can,* and we cannot (and should not) act against our own desires. I give a related anti-Humean argument when I make a distinction between explanatory and justificatory reasons. I argued that participants gave explanatory reasons (which are sometimes even incomprehensible) for their beliefs and behavior, but justificatory reasons are the currency of moral discourse. For Hume, though, desires are our only reasons for action, and they are not subject to rational criticism. Irrational action, then, is impossible. All explanatory reasons are justificatory in virtue of the fact that an agent has them. I want to say, though, that it *is* irrational to eat meat—that we do have a reason not to, namely that an animal's desire not to be eaten outweigh a human's desire to eat that animal. A good ethical framework should tell agents how to act, so what good is a theory that tells agents they *ought* to act in a way that they *cannot* act in because desires are the only reasons for action?

This is a good objection (if I don't say so myself...). I do not have a fully satisfactory reply yet, but I will offer a preliminary response. Hume says that desires (reasons) are not subject to rational criticism, but there are two ways that I believe we can push on this claim in order to show that participants actually do desire not to eat meat, thus giving them a reason not to.

First, desires are underscored by beliefs. If I no longer believed that broccoli is good for my health, my desire to consume it would dissipate. Beliefs are certainly subject to rational criticism, and, insofar as they underscore desires, rational criticism can influence desires.[105] If, for example, the participants' desires to eat meat were underscored by the belief that eating meat is necessary for good health and this belief turned out to be false, the desire should be adjusted accordingly.

There is another sense in which desires are subject to rational criticism that I have already touched upon in Sections 2.2 and 2.3. If the fulfillment of a lower order desire would doom a higher order desire, then it is irrational and should not be fulfilled. Only those desires that survived the "idealizing" process—those desires that are above-all desires or conducive to above-all desires, non-contradictory, and formed clear-headedly—should be fulfilled. It seems

[104] That is, of course, when it meets Varner's other conditions that I outlined in Chapter X.
[105] As far as I can tell, Hume would not disagree with this.

plausible that we can criticize someone's desire to smoke in light of the fact that they also have the desire to live as long a life as possible. It would not seem incoherent to tell the smoker that his desire to smoke is irrational since that desire would not survive the idealizing process.

One could argue that the desire to eat meat could not survive the idealizing process. For example, if eating meat is indeed morally wrong and an agent desires to do the right thing *de dicto* (whatever the right thing is), and that desire occupies a higher tier on their hierarchy of desires, then their desire to eat meat should be disqualified. I think all of my participants did have the desire to do the right thing. Most of them described themselves as having strong moral convictions and valuing ethical consistency (an average rating of 5.8 on a Likert scale). It is very possible, then, that they do have the desire not to eat meat after all (recall that we can be mistaken about our own desires).

This reply is only somewhat satisfactory, though, because it is conceptually possible for there to be a person that simply does not desire to do the right thing. To this person, Hume would be able to say nothing. I would prefer that *ought* have a Kantian force in the statement "we ought to be treating animals better than we currently treat animals" such that agents have a reason to treat animals well regardless of their own psychology. If I am to employ the Humean action theory in defense of animal desires, then I forfeit this Kantian force behind *ought*.

To return to the theme of the previous section, I can practically guarantee that none of my participants (if they make it this far into my thesis...) will find this objection as disconcerting as I do. It is on a completely different level than the way most of them think about morality. I cannot pretend to think that analytic philosophy and the "reasoning" processes employed by most participants are equally valid modes of inquiry into morality. If I did, then I would not be studying philosophy. At the same time, I have to ask myself if I am falling victim to Ruben's cynical worry: "Am I just doing whatever I want and then finding a reason to justify it?" Is philosophy just a fancy way of finding justification for what I already believe? I do not think so, but this is a fair question to ask.

I will give one more objection, but to this one I have a satisfactory reply. One consequence of the desire-satisfaction based consequentialism that I defended is that almost everyone—or at least those of us who are not among the world's poorest—fails to live in such a way that produces a net amount of good. Desires come into conflict all the time. I argued that an animal's desire not to live a life of physical pain (at minimum) conflicts with and outweighs a human's desire to eat that animal, but that is just one of a host of desire conflicts that we encounter every day. My desire to eat a Laughing Planet© burrito (even a vegan one) conflicts with someone's desire to have an insecticide-treated mosquito net in order to prevent malarial infection. If I spend $6.40 on a burrito, I am dooming the desire of someone in need of a

mosquito net who would not otherwise receive one.[106] Our desires do conflict—only one or the other can be fulfilled.[107] Surely my desire for a burrito would be greatly outweighed by someone's desire not to have malaria (a sub-desire that is necessary to his or her ground project). The consequences of this are tragic. Every time I buy a burrito, I am contributing to the spread of malaria.[108] When I fulfill a desire to see Joshua Bell in concert, I am dooming the desires of about 51.5 people to be treated for schistosomiasis, which has symptoms ranging from general malaise through to kidney damage, intestinal damage, disfiguration of the limbs, blindness, and death.[109] Surely this is no contest.

I honestly believe that these are consequences of the view that I fully endorse, but do I eat Laughing Planet burritos? Yes, and I have seen Joshua Bell in concert as well. So, how can I fault those meat-eating participants who recognize that their actions are wrong, yet still consume meat?

In Section 3.2, I expressed skepticism that participants were constrained by what they were *able* to do in terms of their meat-eating choices, so I should take the skeptical stance towards myself as well. When we perceive a gap between what we are doing and what we judge we ought to be doing, we make excuses. Before I evaluate my own excuses, I will share some excuses from the meat-eating participants:

> Jamie: I think lots of people [think industrial meat production] is wrong, but to take it on it's like it would have to become your life's mission, you'd have to become an advocate to try to take on responsible roles and getting involved in that where I think our food choice and our eating is a segment of our life.
>
> Hector: You can't focus on everything. If you're an engineer, you focus on that and you eat what you can. I don't think it's important for everyone to [eat conscientiously.]
>
> Rodney: The meat industry, yes it happens, and people get hit walking across the road, but we don't live our lives thinking we can't go out of the house because there's the potential for me to go outside, get hit by a car, and get killed. You still have your life to continue and so whether it's going to the store and buying a

[106] The Against Malaria Foundation (AMF) provides long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets for $6.40 to people in 35 African countries and has been rated one of the world's most cost-effective charities by Give Well and Giving What We Can.

[107] Buying both a burrito and a mosquito net would not resolve the conflict. The money spent on the burrito could still have been used to satisfy yet another person's desire to have a mosquito net. The conflict will not be resolved so long as even one person is still in need of a mosquito yet.

[108] Under refined consequentialism, we should take action to produce the greatest *rationally expectable* amount of good. So, for any given burrito purchase, malarial infection may or may not be an actual consequence, but if we think probabilistically, then the consequence is negative.

[109] This was calculated using Give Well's estimate of the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative's $.68/treatment rate and a $35 Joshua Bell concert ticket.

package of meat and you don't know where that meat comes from. You just know that it's in a nice package and it is red and you're going to cook it and eat it. You can't be held hostage in your life by certain things that go on and are outside of your control.

Most of these statements are false. Not eating meat does not have to become one's life mission, one can be an engineer and a vegan or vegetarian at the same time, and whether or not we consume meat is in our control. To completely reject the legitimacy of these excuses, however, would be unfair. They speak to a larger critique of this desire-satisfaction based consequentialism, which is that it is too demanding. If we constantly had to evaluate our desires, calculate the probable outcome of every action, and act in the way that produces the most good, life would be exhausting. This does not really strike me as a critique, though. The fact that quantum mechanics is difficult does not mean that it is not the best theory. We would not say, "it's too hard!" and just give up. Instead, we do the best we can with quantum mechanics, and we should do the same with ethics. At the very least, we should look for opportunities to contribute to the fulfillment of others' desires when it comes at no great cost to our own. We, including myself, can do *a lot* to minimize suffering - and we should. Hector's point that "we cannot focus on everything" is true, but we should acknowledge the conflict between our desires and the desires of others and push ourselves to do the best we can. Not eating meat or eating less meat is one of those opportunities when a small sacrifice on our parts can confer a great benefit to someone else – an animal.

In closing, I would like to return to the question I proposed in my introduction in order to point towards important directions for future research: *What are we to make of this discrepancy between the advice of ethicists and the actions of almost everyone else?* The objections in this section indicate that the gap between ethicists and everyone else may not be as cut-and-dry as I have implied. I have just claimed to be something of an expert on how we treat animals, yet I can still find mistakes (or missed steaks) with this normative theory as well as abundant inconsistencies in my own actions considering how demanding the normative theory I endorse is. In other words, I am an expert, but I am also everyone else. This also challenges the analogy I drew between scientific discoveries and ethical theories that I referenced in the introduction as well as in the previous section. Are there ethical experts in the same way that there are scientific experts? Many would find this analogy objectionable, and I understand why. Are ethicists better moral agents than ordinary people? Disappointingly, the answer is not really. I do, however, think that philosophers are better-equipped to reason through moral problems—to consciously privilege the newly-evolved "reasoning-why" over our intuitive "seeing-as" judgments. We have the potential to train ourselves to be more rational, which, as a conceptual rationalist, I believe makes us into better moral agents. Figuring out how to go about this "training," who is entitled to give the "training," and who is disposed to change their moral

decision-making processes is yet another project that involves weaving the empirical with the normative in order to produce philosophically interesting and pragmatically valuable results. My project only grazes the surface of the ethics around meat-consumption, shedding but a small ray of light on a crevasse of deep philosophical issues around the relationship between the empirical and the normative and the resulting implications for these high moral stakes.

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Appendix A. Screening Survey for Meat Consumption Focus Groups

[Asterisks indicate that answers to these questions contributed to participants' reflectivity scores.]

Thanks for your interest in participating in this study which I am conducting as a part of my senior thesis research at Lewis & Clark College. This is a screening survey that will determine your eligibility to continue in the study. If I determine that you are a good candidate based on the results of this screening survey, you will have the opportunity to be paid $45 for participating in three focus group sessions. During these focus groups, you will be asked to talk about your meat consumption, your beliefs about animals, and your ethical beliefs. If this is not something you are interested in, then this study probably isn't a good fit for you and you don't need to take this survey. Otherwise, please continue!

This survey should take you about 15 minutes to complete. You may withdraw at any time.

Before you begin, please acknowledge that you have read and agree to each of the following by checking each box: *

- ☐ I consent to participate in this screening survey concerning my behaviors and attitudes around meat consumption.
- ☐ I understand that completing this survey does not automatically qualify me for this study.
- ☐ I understand that if I do not participate in the study beyond filling out this survey, that my results will not be used.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher, Chloe Waterman who can be contacted at waterman@lclark.edu, is willing to answer any questions that I might have after I have participated in this survey. The researcher reserves the right to answer questions regarding the findings of the survey until after the project has been completed.
- ☐ I understand that no individual data will be reported , and that the researcher will not share my individual results with me either during or after the project. I permit publication of the results of the researcher with the agreement that participant confidentiality is insured.
- ☐ I acknowledge that I am eighteen years of age or older and that I have read and understood the above explanations.
- ☐ Again, I understand that my participation in this survey is voluntary and that I have the ability to withdraw at any point without penalty.
- ☐ I will answer the following questions honestly. I understand that it is totally fine to choose the "I don't know" option or to skip a question all together.

Name *

E-mail address *You must have a valid e-mail address to participate in this study.

Phone number *

Are you proficient in English? *

Page 2
After page 1
Do you eat animal byproducts?

- Yes
- No
- What is an animal byproduct?

Page 3
After page 2
On average, how many times do you eat beef each week?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

On average, how many times do you eat chicken each week?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

How many times have you eaten chicken in the last week (7days)?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

Page 4
After page 3

Where did the chicken come from? If you don't know, just write "I don't know."

About how old was the chicken when it was killed? If you don't know, just write "I don't know."

Page 5

After page 4

How many times have you eaten pork in the last week?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

How many times have you eaten beef in the last week?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

Page 6

After page 5

Where did the beef come from? If you don't know, just write "I don't know."

Page 7

After page 6

Have you eaten any other kinds of meet this week?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Page 8

After page 7

Which kind(s)?

Page 9

After page 8

Why do you not eat animal byproducts?

For how long have you been vegan?

- less than 1 month
- 1-6 months
- 6 months-1 year
- 1-3 years
- 4-10 years
- 10+ years

Page 10
After page 9
Would you eat a dog?

- Yes
- No
- Depends

Have you ever thought about that question before?

- Yes
- No

How many vegetarians do you know?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-10
- 10+

How many vegans do you know?

- 0

- 1-3
- 4-10
- 10+
- What is a vegan?

Is anyone in your family vegetarian or vegan? (besides you)

- Yes
- No

Would you rather eat meat from an animal that you have met personally or never met?

- Met personally
- Never met
- It doesn't matter to me

Would you rather eat meat from an animal that someone else killed or that you have killed yourself?

- Someone else killed
- Killed myself
- It doesn't matter to me

Do you have a dog?

- Yes
- No
- I used to

Page 11
After page 10
Have you ever considered putting your dog on a vegetarian or vegan diet?

- I considered it but decided not to
- I haven't considered it before
- I do/did keep my dog on a vegetarian or vegan diet

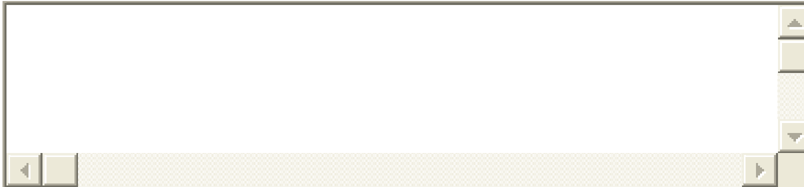
Page 12
After page 11
Have you ever tried going vegetarian or vegan?

- Yes
- No

Page 13
After page 12
How long were you vegetarian or vegan?

- less than a week
- 1 week-1 month
- 1 month-1 year
- 1-3 years
- I am still vegetarian

Page 14
After page 13
Why did you begin consuming meat again?



Page 15
After page 14

Do you think that deciding whether or not to eat meat is a moral decision?

- Yes
- No

Do you think cows can experience happiness?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Have you ever wondered if cows experience happiness?

- Yes, I have wondered that.
- No, I have not wondered that before.
- I'm not sure if I have for cows in particular, but I have for some animal(s)

Page 16
After page 15
How did you hear about this study?

- I saw a flyer
- A friend
- I have taken classes at the Portland Meat Collective
- Other:

Page 17
After page 16
Where did you see the flyer?
Page 18
After page 17

Thank you!

That's all folks! Thanks so much for participating! I will contact you soon to let you know if you're a good fit for this study. If so, I'll send more information about the focus groups and you can decide whether you wish to participate further at that time. Remember that if you choose not to participate, your responses will not be used in the study. Feel free to contact me, Chloe Waterman, at waterman@lclark.edu if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. Thanks again! Also, please pass on this survey link to anyone you know who might be interested!
Page 19
After page 18

Thank you!

Appendix B. Meat Consumption Study Follow-Up Survey

Name

What is your occupation?

What is your age?

Since your final focus session during the week of 2/13-2/17, how many times per week have you eaten beef on average?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

How many times did you eat beef in the last week (7 days)?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

Page 2

After page 1

Where did the beef come from?

Page 3

After page 2

Since your final focus session during the week of 2/13-2/17, how many times per week have you eaten pork on average?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

Since your final focus session during the week of 2/13-2/17, how many times per week have you eaten chicken on average?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

How many times have you eaten chicken in the past week (7 days)?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

Page 4
After page 3

Where did the chicken come from?

Page 5
After page 4

Since your final focus session, have you eaten: Animal byproducts include eggs, butter, cheese, milk, etc.

- Less animal byproducts than usual
- More animal byproducts than usual
- About the same amount of animal byproducts as usual

Since your final focus session, how conscious have you been about where your meat comes from and how it was raised?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not at all conscious								Very conscious

Do you think that deciding whether or not to eat meat is a moral decision?

- Yes
- No

Page 6
After page 5

Why do you think deciding whether or not to eat meat is a moral decision?

Page 7

After page 6

Why do you think that deciding whether or not to eat meat is not a moral decision?

Page 8

After page 7

Do you think cows can experience happiness?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Have any of your beliefs about animals or animal capacities changed as a result of this study? Please explain. Animal emotions, intelligence, abilities, consciousness, etc.

Have any of your beliefs about ethics in general changed as a result of this study? Please explain. Think of our general discussion about morality and the thought experiments we did.

How important is having consistent/non-contradictory ethical beliefs to you?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not at all important								Very important

How consistent do you think your ethical beliefs are?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not at all consistent (they contradict)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very consistent (little to no contradiction)

How much did the study challenge the consistency of your ethical beliefs?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very much

Did you learn anything new about the meat industry as a result of this study? Please explain.

Of all the arguments for vegetarianism/veganism/partial vegetarianism that we discussed, which did you find most convincing? Why?

Would you like to stop eating meat?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure
- ○ I am already vegetarian/vegan

Have any of your beliefs about meat-eating changed as a result of this study? Please explain.

What do you think the likelihood is that you will drastically change your meat consumption habits in the future based on ethical considerations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very unlikely											Very likely

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Last page!

Was participating in this study a positive experience for you? Please explain.

Do you have any suggestions as to how the study could be improved for the future?

Any final comments?

Would you like to recieve a copy of my thesis once completed in May?

- Yes
- No thanks

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THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for participating in this study. Your contributions have been extremely valuable. Feel free to e-mail me if you have any questions or concerns at waterman@lclark.edu