

ANIMALS AND HUMAN OBLIGATIONS: An Argument for Vegetarianism and Limited Testing

1) It is morally wrong to do what would cause animals to suffer gratuitously, at least when we can do so without excessive risk or cost. [Our obligation not to cause animals to suffer gratuitously may be derivative of a more general duty not to cause gratuitous suffering, and a perhaps also a general duty to defend from harm morally significant beings who are incapable of defending themselves.]

Df: Gratuitous suffering is suffering which is either i) reasonless, capricious, or arbitrary, or ii) not necessary for the avoidance of other suffering (perhaps human suffering) of a similar magnitude.

2) If an industry or corporation is systematically committing grave moral wrongs, then we have an obligation not to support that industry or corporation. (At least, or especially when we can avoid supporting it without excessive sacrifice. Whether sacrifice is "excessive" is a function of i) setback to our interests if we avoid supporting this industry or corporation, and ii) the degree of harm caused by this industry.

3) The meat industry, and the factory farming industry, commits grave moral wrongs by causing extreme suffering and hardship on the animals raised and slaughtered. [Ex: tenderizing live cattle, refusing to adopt humane killing methods, unnecessary and unjustifiable deprivation of animals being raised for slaughter...]

4) By buying meat at any major grocery store, or ordering meat in any ordinary restaurant, one supports the meat industry, and the factory farming industry.

5) It would be fairly easy for us (neither risky nor excessively costly) to avoid supporting the meat/factory farming industry by reducing our meat consumption or becoming vegetarians.

6) **CONCLUSION I:** From above premises it follows that we have an obligation to avoid supporting the meat/factory farming industry by reducing our meat consumption and perhaps by being or becoming vegetarians. This implies at *least* an obligation not to buy meat at stores or restaurants.

7) Many experiments on animals cause animals great suffering, and often the results of such experiments cannot be expected to lead to important results, save lives, or prevent further suffering. [Fits within our definition of "gratuitous."]

8) Such experiments constitute grave moral wrongs.

8) These wrongs could be prevented, or at least mitigated, if guidelines were in place stipulating that scientists have no legal right to cause suffering to animals except when there is a reasonable probability that the experimental results are likely to allow us to relieve at least as much suffering [by rough, reasonable estimate] as is caused during the experimentation.

9) If legislative restrictions would prevent harms and right violations (and do not involve excessive costs), then we have an obligation to support such legislation.

10) **CONCLUSION II:** We have an obligation to support such legislation. [On common assumptions, the moral "weight" of this obligation relative to other of our obligations will be roughly proportional to the amount of gratuitous suffering inflicted in the course of such experimentation. If Singer, Regan, Midgley, are right about their empirical claims, then this obligation is very weighty indeed.]