

## Ethical Vegetarianism

It is wrong to eat meat in the circumstances we normally actually face.

V's case for Ethical Vegetarianism involves these two causal claims:

- GENERAL CAUSAL CLAIM: the buying of meat by the general public causes enormous animal suffering.
- INDIVIDUAL CAUSAL CLAIM: individual acts of buying meat contribute to animal suffering.

Objection: but is the INDIVIDUAL CAUSAL CLAIM true?

(King Soopers example)

An Argument from the falsity of the INDIVIDUAL CAUSAL CLAIM to the falsity of Ethical Vegetarianism (the "Causal Impotence Objection"):

P1. No individual decision whether to buy meat ever makes a difference to animal suffering. [denial of INDIVIDUAL CAUSAL CLAIM]

P2. But an act of buying meat is wrong only if it contributes to animal suffering.

C. So no acts of buying meat are wrong.

On P2:

- Premises like this are sometimes described as "utilitarian"
- Utilitarianism: an act is morally permissible if and only if no alternative to it would have a better effect on the welfare of beings capable of welfare.
  - So on Utilitarianism, all that ultimately matters to what we morally ought to do is the effect on beings that can be better or worse off
  - We'll assume that welfare involves at least happiness and pleasure on the positive side and pain and misery on the negative side.

- It's a consequence of Utilitarianism that if all of an agent's options would have an equal effect on welfare, then all of those options are morally permissible.
- QUESTIONS:
  - How do we get from Utilitarianism to P2?
  - Do you have to be a Utilitarian to accept P2?

### Quick digression on Ethical Theory:

- The main competing moral theory to Utilitarianism is Deontology.
  - A common form nowadays is Moderate Pluralist Deontology, which consists of a plurality of duties none of which are absolute duties, e.g.:
    - don't cause suffering
    - if you make a promise, keep it
    - don't lie
    - help others out
- and maybe also:
- don't reward wrongdoing (p. 33)
  - don't benefit from others' wrongdoing (p. 34)

### Three kinds of response to the Causal Impotence Objection:

- (i) The Appeal to Indirect Effects (from last time): Deny P1 by denying that the King Soopers example shows that INDIVIDUAL CAUSAL CLAIM is false even if it shows that individual decisions to buy meat ever directly affect the mean industry. That's because these decisions can have effects on others' decisions whether to buy meat. (Relevance of GENERAL CAUSAL CLAIM)
- (ii) Deontological Replies: Deny P2:
  - Analogy with Killian
  - Deontological principles to explain this

(iii) The Appeal to Thresholds (denies P1 more directly)

... for next time