

The Argument from Pain and Suffering

P1. It is wrong to inflict a great deal of pain and suffering on others for the sake of relatively minor benefits.

P2. The meat industry inflicts a great deal of pain and suffering on animals for the sake of relatively minor benefits.

C. Therefore, the meat industry is acting wrongly.

Let's work out M's meat-industry-friendly position:

M1:

When X is more intelligent than Y, it's ok for X to inflict great suffering on Y for sake of minor benefits.

Problem:

- the sadistic genius
- super-intelligent aliens

M2:

(i) It is ok to inflict great suffering on beings whose intelligence is below a certain threshold for the sake of minor benefits for those above that threshold.

(ii) that threshold is below humans but above the main animals that humans eat (e.g., pigs, chickens, cows)

Problem:

- the two CU students with headaches

M3:

(i) It is ok to inflict great suffering on beings whose intelligence is below a certain threshold for the sake of minor benefits for those above that threshold.

(ii) that threshold is below humans but above the main animals that humans eat (e.g., pigs, chickens, cows)

(iii) for beings that are above the intelligence threshold, their interests matter equally

Issue:

If a being is below the threshold of intelligence, does their pain matter a little bit or not at all?

M4:

- (i) It is ok to inflict great suffering on beings whose intelligence is below a certain threshold for the sake of minor benefits for those above that threshold.
- (ii) that threshold is below humans but above the main animals that humans eat (e.g., pigs, chickens, cows)
- (iii) for beings that are above the intelligence threshold, their interests matter equally
- (iv) for beings below the threshold of intelligence, their pain is only 1/1,000,000th as bad as equal pain caused to those above the intelligence threshold.

Problem:

Some humans are below the intelligence threshold.

M5:

- (i)* It is ok to inflict great suffering for the sake of minor benefits on beings who
 - (a) have intelligence below a certain threshold and
 - (b) belong to a species normal members of which are below that threshold.
- (ii) that threshold is below humans but above the main animals that humans eat (e.g., pigs, chickens, cows)
- (iii)* for beings that are either above the intelligence threshold or are members of species for whom above-threshold intelligence is normal, their interests matter equally
- (iv) for beings below the threshold of intelligence, their pain is only 1/1,000,000th as bad as equal pain caused to those above the intelligence threshold.