

Original article

**Singerian Vegetarianism and the Limits of Utilitarianism:  
A path towards a Meaning Ethics**

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**Abstract:** The advent of the technological era put us in a radically different position against nature, because the whole biosphere can now be affected by our actions. Therefore, even though non-humans always had moral significance, only recently we start to realize their importance. So, we recognize them as morally significant much more than before. This brings a renewal to, and makes more patent than ever, the discussion over vegetarianism, since it challenges our view on the relation between human beings and other sentient beings. In *Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism*, Peter Singer tries to answer the question through the conceptual resources of utilitarianism. In contrast, we shall try to show that the issue of vegetarianism can start to be solved better in an ethical consideration that transcends the merely prescriptive.

**Key words:** Vegetarianism, Animal Ethics, Utilitarianism, Hans Jonas, Peter Singer, Food Ethics.

**Introduction:** In this paper, I will try to show that Singer's arguments in favour of vegetarianism are insufficient to resolve the controversy over eating meat, as long as they are exclusively supported on a utilitarian basis. This is because the problem, as I shall demonstrate later, exceeds the limits of utilitarianism. Overcoming these limits leads us to further ethical considerations that show the necessity of rethinking our relationship with non-human animals in a way that is not merely normative, i.e., considerations that solely prescribe rights and wrongs from a merely regulatory perspective. I will try to shed light upon what kind of ethical reflection is necessary to answer the question, namely, if it is morally acceptable to eat animals, through the concept of Ethical Vision, which I shall explain later on.

I shall start by recalling Singer's main arguments. Next, I will subject them to a plausible objection, proceeding under the conceptual background of utilitarianism as well and showing how this exercise takes us to a dead point. Finally, from this impossibility of knock-out arguments, it will be shown what kind of reflection is necessary to shed light on the issue of our food ethics in relation to the Ethical Vision.

**Singer's utilitarian arguments for vegetarianism:** In *Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism*, Singer argues that, from a consistent utilitarian position, it follows that, given the contemporary state of factory farming, one should abandon meat-eating and become a vegetarian. So, at the beginning of his essay he says: "I'm a utilitarian. I'm also a vegetarian.

I'm a vegetarian *because* I am a utilitarian"<sup>1</sup>. For Singer, taking animals into consideration is a simple and obvious corollary of the principle of utility, as he states:

When we apply utilitarianism to the issue of how we should treat animals, one vital point stands out immediately. Utilitarianism, in its classical form, aims at minimizing pain and maximizing pleasure. Many nonhuman animals can experience pain and pleasure. (Perhaps some simpler forms of animal life cannot, but I shall leave this qualification aside.) Therefore, they are morally significant entities. They have moral standing. In this respect they are like humans and unlike rocks<sup>2</sup>.

Nonetheless, as he starts supporting such a position, it becomes clear that the relation between animal suffering and vegetarianism does not seem to result in an obligatory prescription. Even though his arguments increase the plausibility of vegetarianism as a more compassionate lifestyle, he cannot prove its mandatory character, because apparently there are no knock-out arguments against meat-eating. Now, I shall analyse Singer's arguments and give some counterarguments against them, showing how this procedure leads us to a point where it seems that both positions can equally be sustained under a utilitarian standpoint.

One of the pivotal Singerian arguments shows that the universal adoption of vegetarianism and the consequent elimination of factory farming would maximize pleasure, and this is because, when considering advantages and disadvantages, the consequentialist calculation results in a positive balance in favour of vegetarianism. Nonetheless, it is possible to dissolve each part of the argument providing some alternatives that could equally maximize pleasure:

- a) The end of factory farming reduces wastes and contamination from industrial production: One can answer to this that vegetarian and carnivorous industries can be equally contaminating if production is irresponsible. A sustainable meat industry is perfectly possible. An adequate management of wastes and resources is something that both kinds of industries can perform, so, contamination is not an intrinsic characteristic of meat production. An exploration of a possibly sustainable meat production can be found in Simon Fairlie's *Meat, a Benign Extravagancy*<sup>3</sup>.
- b) The elimination of industrial farms releases a huge amount of high quality vegetable food that could feed the hungry and marginal human populations, instead of feeding animals for meat production: One can say that the problem of hunger is not the scarceness of food, but an inefficient and negligent distribution of it. While some have excess food, others do not have enough. A righteous distribution of food restores a positive balance of pleasure, and one can provide for this end vegetable foods as well as food from animal sources.
- c) Even though the most important factor in this calculation is animal suffering, the utility of people involved must be taken into consideration too, as Singer does in his argument. Singer points out that working in an industrial factory farm is obnoxious and psychologically harming for workers: This issue is not intrinsically related to all factory farming, in a similar way presented in a), since one can have poor working conditions in a carnivorous industry as well as a vegetarian one. Cruelty-free farms

can be created or simply an adequate administration of human resources can be performed.

I think this exercise can be applied to most of the arguments in *Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism*, so I shall not go further with it to prove the point. Nonetheless, this does not reduce their legitimacy at all, because my hypothetical objections operate only through plausibility as well, and not as knockout arguments. Through this, one can see that, in the defence or abolishment of vegetarianism, we would arrive at a dead end from the point of view of utilitarianism, since there are a lot of alternatives that equally maximize utility. Singer seems, in fact, to concede this point at the end of his essay when he says:

Finally, becoming a vegetarian is a way of attesting to the depth and sincerity of one's belief in the wrongness of what we are doing to animals. Perhaps in a society of sophisticated philosophers there would be no need to attest to one's sincerity in this way, because sophisticated philosophers would understand that one can sincerely oppose the exploitation of animals in factory farms while continuing to buy and enjoy the product of these very farms. But to most of the members of our society this would mean, as it seemed to Oliver Goldsmith's fictitious Chinese traveler, a "strange contrariety of conduct"<sup>4</sup>.

However, one can stretch the sort of alternatives mentioned earlier even further, as Evelyn Pluhar does in *Meat and Morality*, where she explores methods such as *in vitro* meat production<sup>5</sup>. This method can unpainfully extract some stem cells from animals, and then produce meat in a laboratory with completely cruelty free conditions; with such a method, animal life is not disturbed at all. An exploration through this kind of alternative, from the point of view of a utilitarian calculation, may be very fruitful, but can also be very unappealing to some sensitivities outside of a utilitarian outline, as she says:

Granted, the initial reaction of many meat-eaters to the in-vitro meat initiative is repulsion. An unscientific poll conducted by this author elicited comments such as "That's disgusting!" and "Who knows what they would put in that stuff?" They envision meat cells replicating like mold in a laboratory, injected with dubious additives by white-coated Frankensteins. Currently, production does involve a queasiness factor: cells mature in "fetal bovine serum." Researchers are at work substituting a plant-based nutrient agent, however, well aware that this would be advantageous in marketing the product to erstwhile vegetarians as well as meat-eaters with humane concerns<sup>6</sup>.

However, there could be more reactions that do not exclusively consist in mere disgust, especially if we take into consideration religious and conservative beliefs, conceptions with a stronger underlying anthropology or moral theories whose main criteria is not pain and pleasure. In this sense, such methods can raise even more complicated ethical and anthropological problems than factory farming, concerns the principle of utility does not take into account as long as their consequences maximize pleasure. Even more, if our humane

concern for animals is solely based on suffering and rights derived from it, one could perfectly ask: Why not produce human meat in vitro? In this manner, there is no risk of somehow violating animal interests in any way, since no pain or invasion on animals is at play at all. This way, humans, who are the ones interested in consuming meat, put themselves unpainfully as resource for meat production without causing any suffering or invasion to other species. If meat can be produced from human stem cells, this would be a really good solution from a point of view concerned with animal suffering. But evidently, such a provocation is not ethically neutral at all, since most people would be really perturbed by such a possibility, even though one cannot articulate significant reasons for this disgust immediately that are related to our intuitions over human nature.

Is not my intent with this argument to support an ethical view purely based on intuitions, but to show how intuitions give rise to ethical reflections that can eventually be supported by reason or rejected, because, as Michael Sandel points out, is difficult to find significant reasons for our unease<sup>7</sup>. In this sense, rejection of animal suffering shows itself, initially, as a pre-moral unease that is not yet clearly articulated. Later, the rationally-driven agent tries to articulate significant reasons for this concern, as Singer does. Therefore, in a similar way as Sandel in *The Case against Perfection*<sup>8</sup>, the starting point of our considerations for the limited purposes of this paper will be our intuitions, and in this sense, it has pre-moral components; this does not mean that further development of the concepts proposed here will remain at this stage. So, in the next section, I will try to provide a conceptual resource that can help to articulate our concern which is related to animal suffering and that utilitarianism seems to not take into account.

**The Ethical Vision:** If one takes a look at Aristotle's Ethics of Virtue, one can see two distinct aspects come into play. In the first place, a set of principles that prescribe good actions, in this case virtuous actions, are provided. Through the middle within two extremes and other principles, action is restricted to a certain frame of legitimacy, and in this sense, this part of the theory is normative or prescriptive. However, one can also see that these principles are related to a prefigured image of the subject's life as a whole. The means and ends are chosen by the subject in order to fulfil the content of this image under the guidance of virtues. In this sense, the second component of Aristotle's ethics is concerned with meaning, rather than setting prescriptive principles, and as Macintyre points out "generally to adopt a stance on the virtues will be to adopt a stance on the narrative character of human life"<sup>9</sup>. The image described is not a merely abstract outline, but is filled with concrete representative content, for example, a dream of certain career that drives a student's life.

However, one can detach this conceptual background from Aristotle's specific interpretation of virtues and happiness. In this sense, ethics in general can have this prescriptive aspect and another concerned with meaning. The first is concerned with providing a set of *a priori* principles that determine which actions are good or evil. The second aspect analyzes *a posteriori* the representative content of our life as a totality of meaning. I shall call this representative content *Ethical Vision*, which contains different narratives that guide our actions in an intelligible way. This is because "behavior is only characterized adequately

when we know what the longer and longest-term intentions invoked are and how the shorter-term intentions are related to the longer. Once again we are involved in writing a narrative history.”<sup>10</sup> This guidance is not only restricted to the personal level, but extends to the interpersonal as well because, as Macintyre explains, “[w]e cannot, that is to say, characterize behavior independently of intentions, and we cannot characterize intentions independently of the settings which make those intentions intelligible both to agents themselves and to others.”<sup>11</sup> This adds an intersubjective function to the Ethical Vision. Generally, if we find someone whose behavior is not intelligible from the point of view of our shared narratives, we most likely will be unable to recognize this person as a morally significant agent; in this sense they are moral strangers.

Detached from Aristotle’s particular point of view, an Ethical Vision can vary in length, since it can go from the wishes of self-realization of some subject to the grand narratives that underlies a strong political or religious belief. In this last sense, it can be similar to those grand narratives the postmodern condition rejects<sup>12</sup>. It is true that an Ethical Vision could actually consist in a teleological explanation of history but, as described earlier, since they vary in length, not all Ethical Visions are grand narratives. So, I shall state that a grand narrative is a certain type of Ethical Vision. Therefore, the concept of Ethical Vision does not commit us to the postmodern condition criticism, since the latter rejects an ultimate meaning behind history, but not every possible way of meaning behind actions. One could say then, more specifically, that the Ethical Vision has grades that vary from the local and particular point of view of a subject to a universal position, or from biography to eschatology.

As explained above, Ethical Vision has a crucial importance, because it provides meaning and a common ground to actions that, without its guidance, appear just as unconnected events with no moral relevance. In other words, its absence might result in the conclusion of pure nihilism or a human condition of mere automatism. An otherwise unconnected series of events acquire moral significance when an Ethical Vision underlies them.

From the former description one can easily infer that an Ethical Vision underlies Singer’s argumentation as well. To determine its content completely, one should ask the author for it, but I shall tentatively describe it. I think the Ethical Vision behind Singer’s argumentation consists, at least, in a certain spiritual status or humane consideration for animals, and a relationship with humans that follows from this status. From this point of view, it seems that *Animal Liberation* is a much clearer testament of Singer’s Ethical Vision. What Renzo Llorente says could support this, as he explains:

What does prove surprising, however, is the frequency with which even professional philosophers have misconstrued or misstated some of *Animal liberation’s* central theses. The most common error among professional philosophers no doubt consists in the belief that the moral argument advanced by *Animal Liberation* is based on utilitarianism, or – what in effect amounts to the same thing – the tendency to analyze the book as though its normative basis were utilitarian, when in reality the views defended in *Animal Liberation* are derived, at bottom, from the principle of non-

maleficence, i.e. “not causing harm”, and the principle of “equal consideration of interests”<sup>13</sup>.

This further emphasizes that utilitarianism is not the only resource for justifying vegetarianism in Singer’s philosophical framework, but neither just a set of principles for a mere logical exercise. I think Singer actually envisions a certain world that he considers morally ideal. I shall argue, then, that in *Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism* the intuitions of his Ethical Vision tend to slip in too, even though he clearly states his intention to base vegetarianism exclusively in the principle of utility and equal consideration of interests. In the passage of *Citizen of the World*, quoted at the beginning of *Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism*, where humans being are described as tender and compassionate beings, his vision seems to be suggested<sup>14</sup>. Also, when he criticizes the consideration of animals as mere means to an end and gets accused of being a Kantian, but he quickly moves back to avoid betraying the exclusivity of the principle of utility:

This is a “slippery slope” argument: no matter how humane our original intentions, as long as we continue to eat animals there is a danger of our sliding back into the methods of treating animals in use today. [...] I may have been insufficiently critical of my own use of the argument, but I have not become a Kantian<sup>15</sup>.

**The limits of utilitarianism:** The reason why it seems possible to give good arguments in favour and against vegetarianism lies in the fact that we have reached what seems to be the limits of utilitarianism. It is not my intent to discredit this ethical theory at all, but to re-orientate its application context. Utilitarianism is supposed to be a regulatory framework for our actions, it tells us when an action is right or wrong, but is not able to provide an Ethical Vision. For this reason, it is possible to propose very different states of affairs which could result in the same calculation of total pleasure, and this is why all the alternatives proposed in the former sections apparently stood with equal ground against Singer’s arguments. The best alternative according to its consequences, at this point, gets out of our grasp, and so it is very difficult to solve the issue from a utilitarian point of view.

The principle of utility is applied to an already given situation or to the methods one chooses to carry out a certain goal. It orients us to take the best choice with regard to a certain ethical dilemma, but the same thing that assures the freedom of the subject in utilitarianism is what prevents it from solving the issue of vegetarianism: the fact that it abstains from determining the content of the Ethical Vision. One can carry out whatever vital plan one chooses, as long as it goes along with principle of utility, and one can be a vegetarian or a meat-eater as long as one proceeds in a way that actually preserves a positive balance in the total amount of pleasure.

So, with regard to the Singerian question, namely, whether utilitarianism commits its adherents to the obligatory practice of vegetarianism, I think the answer is negative. Anyway, this does not mean we should give up completely any attempt to solve the issue and abandon the decision of being a vegetarian to mere personal preference. For similar reasons as those

that I have pointed out, Jordan Curnutt proposes an argument for vegetarianism which dispenses of pain or utility as a main criteria<sup>16</sup>.

**Ethics as a Normative Frame and as Meaning Ethics:** I consider utilitarianism to be a *Normative Frame*, in the sense that what it does is prescribing the right action for every choice we make. It enables us to distinguish quickly and exactly the right from the wrong choice. However, is not a meaning ethics, in other words, it does not tell us what our plan for a good life should be, how we should interact with others fruitfully, how we should represent us the world as a utopian place, etc. In this sense, a Normative Frame could be defined as a set of principles or guidelines that indicates when an action is right or wrong, in the case of utilitarianism being the principle of utility. On the other hand, I shall define a *Meaning Ethics as the reflection which enable us to critically fill with ideal representations a certain Ethical Vision*. It is an anthropological, creative, and critical reflection over the narratives behind our moral representations and actions. I think the controversy over vegetarianism can be greatly clarified under this understanding of ethics, since it concerns a new relationship, still in development, between human and non-human beings. Even though we have always eaten animals, now they are subject to production through technology in a global-scale way. Also, even if animals always had moral significance, one can argue that only recently we have started to realize it, especially taking into consideration how new the Animal Liberation movement is.

The overwhelming advance of technics that led to the technological era, has transformed the preceding character of action where, according to Hans Jonas, “action on non-human things did not constitute a sphere of authentic ethical significance”<sup>17</sup>. So, the field of meaning in which our actions had been taking place was established long ago and we take this field for granted, as a given fact. For example, all of us, in a certain way, presuppose that other human beings have certain dignity or that we, at least, owe them some respect, even if it is for instrumental reasons because, otherwise, we would live in a state of war. The context in which this takes place has an underlying common ground for our Ethical Visions to coexist, a common narrative of elements and values we mostly agree on. As Jonas states:

The effective range of action was small, the timespan of foresight, goal setting and accountability was short, control of circumstances limited. Proper conduct had its immediate criteria and almost immediate consummation. Ethics accordingly was of the here and now, of occasions as they arise between men, of the recurrent, typical situations of private and public life. [...] All enjoinders and maxims of traditional ethics, materially different as they may be, show this confinement to the immediate setting of the action. “Love the neighbour as thyself”; “Do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you”; “Instruct your child in the way of truth”; “Strive for excellence by developing and actualizing the best potentialities of your being qua man”; “Subordinate your individual good to the common good”; “Never treat your fellow man as a means only but always also as an end in himself” - and so on<sup>18</sup>.

When someone has a different narrative as ground for his Ethical Visions, we usually consider them moral strangers, for example, a person who has no empathy or care for other human beings, and has a dream to be a serial killer. The alluded narrative has been developing, probably, since the birth of civilization, and so it is deeply implanted in our behaviour; please concede this very hasty historical consideration.

However, this narrative is no longer adequate for our current situation since, as Jonas points out, our relationship with nature has radically changed. The recent advances of technology are gestating a new milestone, maybe as relevant as the agriculture revolution: The technological revolution, whose extent is still on the horizon. But basically, it introduces a new narrative where morally relevant actions are no longer restricted to the interpersonal, but have consequences for the whole biosphere. Human action transcends its immanency and starts to affect non-humans. So nature is no longer an infinite, indomitable, and inexhaustible resource. Now, it shows a vulnerability that demands that we act as responsible agents<sup>19</sup>. Because of this, we should renovate the ontology behind our ethics, namely, rethink what the elements that constitute our current narrative are. Before, the answer was clear: the elements of this ontology were men, groups of men, and immediate consequences. Now, the answer is not so clear. We know how humans play their part in this narrative, but we have no idea how to think of or relate to non-humans, and this includes non-human animals. A somehow unreflective history led us to the previous narrative, we did not choose it because it was provided by our circumstances. But now, it is in our hands to critically acquire our new narrative, because we have an increasingly hegemonic position over our environment, so it no longer imposes on us a certain narrative. Finally, we need a Meaning Ethics that displays the new scenario for morally relevant actions.

I think under this kind of ethical reflection the discussion over vegetarianism should be placed, because it questions a critical point concerning our new moral narrative, namely, which is our relationship to non-humans that are sentient. This last dimension has a huge existential value, since pain and pleasure are critically significant components of our lives. So, viewing ourselves as large-scale agents of pain through meat production is something that inevitably shocks our sensitivity and lead us to some sort of self-criticism. Our previous narrative provided an easy ground to condemn actions such as murder, cannibalism, and others, but is unable to afford any data to judge condemnable actions affecting non-human animals.

In this incipient technological era, it is decisive that we put our efforts on comprehending the new extent of human action, so we can provide an adequate narrative for the changes it brings and lead our Ethical Visions towards the common ground of a desirable future. So, if we were to ask, "Which values and principles should guide our interaction with other animals and the whole biosphere"? I would advance that I consider, at least, unappealing a future where we become insensitive and cruel beings, or one where we completely run out of the resources of our planet. The specific normative frame, namely, the specific set of guidelines for our actions, are to be discovered after we deeply meditate through a meaning ethics, but should be in line with the sentiments and self-image of humanity, and the dangers described earlier.



I consider a very remarkable effort in this line the one discussed in A. G. Holdier's *The Pig's Squeak*. He demystifies a connection between ethics and aesthetics as a mere sentimentalism that roughly can be described as "[t]his sentiment that effective arguments must be existentially satisfactory as well as logical if they are to spark genuine change [...]"<sup>20</sup>. I would add that these kinds of considerations, that may include different sentiments such as compassion, empathy, guilt, disgust, etc., should be taken seriously in any philosophical account, since they provide data for how we could represent animals in our new narratives. In this sense, I think we must put aside the idea that invoking these reasons are mere fallacies or irrelevant personal preferences.

A very advanced and developed form of the Meaning Ethics I propose here is the *Deep Ecology* theoretical framework, by Arne Naess, because it performs an exhaustive and radical revision of the relation between humans and the whole biosphere<sup>21</sup>. Deep Ecology insights provide a renewed ontology that takes into account living beings in a way that is adequate for the current situation of the planet. So, it can shed light on the consequences and dangers of the advent of a technological era, and our relationship with other animals. However, extending more about this subject would fairly exceed the pretensions of this essay.

Finally, if we were to ask, "Is there a sound justification for the common view that humans have a higher moral status than other animals, or is this a view we should no longer accept?," I think that from the point of view of a meaning ethics, one should answer a different question first, namely, how we should *treat* animals, because this can shed light on the moral status of non-human animals. We have to ask in what way we see ourselves coexisting with other animals and what moral sentiments we can have towards them, and transform our initial unease into a rational conviction. Through coexisting, we determine what their moral status is. Asserting moral superiority *prima facie* equals to proceed in the opposite way, namely, determine from a pre-existing theoretical consideration how we should coexist. Also, stating a moral superiority implies that we assert some sort of ontological superiority of human beings, a discussion that could be very difficult and may have no sense, at least from the point of view of meaning ethics, since this type of thinking dispenses of – but does not necessarily reject or abolish – a metaphysical outline.

**Conclusion:** Under the light of all we have previously said, I shall argue that it is a mistake on Singer's part to believe that explicitly aiding himself with his own Ethical Vision equals betraying utilitarianism. What really happens, in my opinion, is that it was initially wrong evaluating through a Normative Framework an issue that is supposed to be treated under the considerations of a Meaning Ethics. The question regarding the moral status of animals cannot be answered completely under the mere consideration of their sentient nature, which only means that they can be added as an element to take into account in the principle of utility and become a factor in a consequentialist calculation. This is because the principle tells us nothing about *how* they should be taken into consideration, namely, with a certain dignity, or rights, or in some specific interrelations with humans, with a compassionate consideration by humans, a loving relationship with humans, etc., because there are a bunch of possible states

of affairs one can propose that massacre animals and still preserve a positive balance of pleasure.

In this sense, if one was in Singer's position, namely, trying to formulate a strong defence of vegetarianism, one should put most of one's efforts in increasing the plausibility of one's Ethical Vision. I think one could proceed, tentatively, in this way: revise and increase the plausibility of one's Ethical Vision, propose a way in which we should interact with animals, and explicitly put on the table how we want to think of ourselves, namely, as cruel or compassionate beings; but the exact argumentation should derive from Singer's own Ethical Vision whose exhaustive content is only available to himself. Following this, I think that the places of *Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism* where Singer seems to retract because he believes he could be exceeding a self-imposed utilitarian outline actually mark the points he should emphasize to proceed in the way of a meaning-producing ethic.

I argued that Singer proceeds in *Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism* under the misunderstanding that one is committing a fallacy if one explicitly points out one's own Ethical Vision; in other words, providing reasons that exceed considerations taken into account on the principle of utility imply a betrayal to utilitarianism. This could not be further from the truth, since Normative Frames and Meaning Ethics are not mutually exclusive. One can perfectly come up with a plausible Ethical Vision for our relationship with animals, and then test its legitimacy by the principle of utility. This implies that utilitarianism would reject every Ethical Vision that may result in a negative balance of pleasure, and this is the only way the principle of utility coerces the Ethical Vision, in the requirement of providing the best possible world one can imagine, one where pleasure is maximal.

Finally, I think Singer has pointed out a very crucial issue when he puts the discussion over vegetarianism in the forefront, since diet constitutes a dimension of human life of tremendous existential significance that is usually underestimated. Eating is one of our most frequent activities, and is a *sine qua non* for life itself in a biological sense. And not only this. Our need for food makes us extract resources and transform the surrounding habitat in a very specific way, so it raises deep environmental concerns as well. It is not an accident that our current practices and eating habits had led to a certain industry, namely, factory farming. So, this dimension has a radical importance for critically understanding the advent and consequences of a technological era. About this, Singer himself says in *Eating Ethically*:

When we eat, or more specifically, when we pay for what we eat, whether at a farmer's market, a supermarket, or a restaurant, we are taking part in a vast global industry. Americans spend more than a trillion dollars on food every year. That's more than double what they spend on motor vehicles and also more than double what the government spends on defense. Food production affects every person on this planet and untold billions of animals as well. It is important, for the sake of the environment, animals, and future generations, that we see our food choices as raising serious ethical issues and learn the implications of what we eat<sup>22</sup>.

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