

Reflections on Food and Farming

Peter Godfrey-Smith

University of Sydney

A talk given to the "Effective Altruism" group at
the University of Sydney, October 2018.

My talk today is about our relationships with nonhuman animals, especially in contexts of farming and our choices about food. The talk is prompted especially by recently reading Peter Singer's classic book *Animal Liberation* in its new edition (2009).¹

My starting point is a belief, in agreement with Singer, that many things are badly wrong in our relationship with nonhuman animals. I want to work out what exactly is wrong, what sort of wrongness this is, and what might we do in response.

The approach taken, in my mind and this talk, is often a back and forth with Singer. I am aware that many others have written on these issues. Some of that work I know and much I don't; this talk is a response to some particular works and a thinking through of the problems from there. I don't mean to slight the others who have written. I'll cite a few of these discussions, but very likely I will cover ground that others have covered before. I want to begin at a particular starting point, one that reflects my admiration for Singer, and work through the issues in my own way.²

In Singer's book, the main policy areas covered are food and scientific experimentation. On the experimentation side, I agree with a lot of what he says, and am

¹ This text is fairly close to the talk given, especially in the first two thirds or so, where there has just been some clean-up and references added. In the last third there is a bit of reorganization.

² Especially in the write-up, I've also made use of *Ethics and Animals* by Lori Guen and "The Replaceability Argument in the Ethics of Animal Husbandry" by Nicholas Delon. I also recently read Cora Diamond's "Eating Meat and Eating People," a paper so interesting and maddening in places that I will write a separate piece of some sort about it. I want to also acknowledge the influence of some other people who are not cited, over many years of discussion and examples set (not wholly followed): Michael Weisberg and Robert Jones.

probably reasonably close to many people here today. I would like to see vastly fewer experiments done that harm animals. There could be much less done while retaining some work, where the cost-benefit accounting seems clear.³ I don't have much that might be new to say on those issues at the moment. The case of food and farming, which is more vexed for me, will be the topic.⁴

Here also, I agree with Singer on many of the basics: modern food production causes huge amount of unwarranted animal suffering. His take-home message is vegetarianism; for him, that is the bottom line.

[T]here is one.. thing we can do that is of supreme importance; it underpins, makes consistent, and gives meaning to all our other activities on behalf of animals. This one thing is that we take responsibility for our own lives, and make them as free of cruelty as we can. The first step is that we cease to eat animals.⁵

The heart of the matter, for Singer, is the suffering and death we cause; we should stop doing those things. Singer is often not concerned with death *per se*, as he thinks that for many animals, painless death is not clearly a bad thing.⁶ Suffering is more central, though death sometimes figures in the argument.

My way in to these questions will include a closer look at causation. Singer works with a simple picture of our causal role: our practices cause much suffering, and needlessly so, as we can be vegans. I will look at these relations in a more fine-grained way, making use of some of the recent philosophical literature on causation. There are two sides to causation – a sort of duality in our concept of cause.⁷ This leads us to some extra structure; it enables a more detailed treatment of our role.

³ There is some discussion of this on my metazoan.net website:

<http://metazoan.net/18-rivalry/>, and <http://metazoan.net/32-rivalry-continued/>

⁴ There are some issues in this area I won't discuss today – environmental damage and waste associated with animal farming, the evils present in wild nature, and (I think much less importantly) the collateral deaths of small animals in plant farming.

⁵ I am working from a Kindle edition without page numbers. So no page references for now, sorry.

⁶ Gruen criticizes this move of Singer's in *Ethics and Animals*.

⁷ See, for example, Ned Hall's "Two Concepts of Causation," (2004) and my "Causal Pluralism" (2010).

Causation has a *production* side and a *difference-making* side. On the production side, being a cause is being part of the process that led to something, whether or not you made a difference to how things turned out. On the other side, there is making a difference to what happened, affecting an outcome, whether or not you were part of the physical process that produced the event.

For *production without difference-making*, think of a team of assassins, where you shoot the target but others would have done so if you had not. You were the cause as producer, the productive agent.

For *difference-making without production*, think of a case where you don't intervene in something; you keep silent or stay still and let a process unfold. Perhaps you were miles away, entirely out of contact with the events. You made a difference by your inaction, but were not a productive agent.

In both cases you were responsible – in *a* sense but not in all senses. If there were back-up causes, then you might have been a difference-maker with respect to the manner in which some event came out, including its exact timing, without being a difference-maker with respect to whether it happened at all. If, on the other hand, you were not a producer, and were not part of the causal chain that gave rise to the event that occurred, then you only *did* it in a special difference-making sense. Usually the two relationships go together, but not always. There has been a tendency in recent philosophy to regard difference-making as more central, but I assume both can be important.

There is good and bad in difference-making: *did you make things worse?* By how much? There is good and bad in production: were you *a producer of good things*, regardless of difference-making? An assessment of difference-making only makes sense when there is a certain kind of order in the system, with fairly clear alternative paths. (What would have happened to this person, or sardine, if I had not done what I did?).

Let's now look at the deaths of animals killed for food. I'll start with wild animals hunted or fished. This is a small and shrinking proportion of the animals that people eat – even in seafood, around half is now farmed. But it is helpful to work through the two cases separately.

In the case of wild animals hunted or fished, we determine the manner and timing of their death. They would die anyway, of some other cause at some other time. We

might cut their life short by a lot, or a little. We might kill them with more, or less, suffering than would otherwise happen. We might generate more, or less suffering for other animals (mates, prey, others in a group) when we kill this one. We are the productive agents in their deaths – we physically make those particular deaths occur – and we are difference-makers with respect to the timing and the manner of death.

In the case of farmed animals (such as cattle, chickens etc.), we have complete responsibility: we are productive agents with respect to their entire lives. We physically bring about their births and (usually) their deaths. We control the good things that happen to them, if there are any, as well as the bad. Once they exist, they will die of something, given the kinds of beings that they are. So once they exist, we don't make a difference to the fact that they will die, only to the manner and timing. But we are difference-makers in whether that life, with a beginning and end, came to exist at all.

Moving to moral questions on each side, and again beginning with wild animals: does the kind of difference-making we engage in make them much worse off than they would have been otherwise? Does it make their life into one that was not worth living at all? And even if we are not making a difference that matters in that way, might we still regret our role as productive agents in all those deaths?

If we take a life that *would* have been worth living, and make it not worth living, because of our role in the manner and timing of the death, that seems bad. In many cases, though, I suspect that we are not making that kind of difference. I think that sustainable wild fishing is OK in principle, for example. I don't mind being a productive agent of those deaths, or a consumer within a system that does those things, as long the difference we make is not too malign.

Now let's go back to farmed animals. This is again the more important case, given the scale, and also the harder case to think through. We are responsible, as I said, for the animal's entire life, for its existence as well as how things go. The situation farmed animals are in today is a remnant of ancient simpler arrangements that had a more reciprocal character, in some cases at least – consider the family cow on a small farm. Those situations are now very rare, I take it, replaced by a system that generally imposes total subjugation and control on every aspect of the animal's life.

The first round of moral questions we can ask about farmed animals then differs from those we would ask about wild animals. Here are some of the questions:

1. Are their lives *worth living at all*? Is the balance of suffering versus wellbeing bad enough for it to have been better, for each of them, never to have lived?
2. If a life in some case is worth living, is it *good enough for us to think that what are doing is OK*? Some people say that if we give an animal a life that is minimally better than nothing, then we can feel fine about that case. Many others would say that we should do a lot more than this – not just that we *ideally* should, but should in order to continue farming at all. Perhaps we should give animals a life rich enough for us to feel proud to have given it to the animal. That is how I think it is reasonable to feel about many domestic pets, cats and dogs. A life of this sort will generally include a certain kind of death.
3. Did we give them a life *better or worse than the wild state*? In some cases it is not clear what this means any more, as the animals have been altered so much by domestication, but in other cases the question makes some sense.
4. Should we be *engaging in this kind of control at all*? Should we think we have the right to do any of this? Is our proper relationship to animal lives one in which, instead, we *don't* control what happens, for good or ill? Quite a lot of people I correspond with seem to think the answer here is *no*. An analogy is made to the treatment of humans: keeping happy slaves would not be OK.

Now I'll look at Singer's arguments. In *Animal Liberation* he wants us to be vegan or near-vegan. The main exception he allows is free-range eggs.⁸ That is quite an important exception, given some things about diet I'll say later. So let's take the view being argued for to be near-veganism of this kind.

Singer usually does *not* think about the situation in terms of the "whole life" framework I started developing a moment ago, where we think of ourselves as responsible for the entire life of the animal and ask whether what we are doing is acceptable. Occasionally he does frame things partially in this way, and perhaps he does

⁸ He is also not very concerned about oysters. This I discussed on my blog a little while ago: <http://metazoan.net/61-somewhere-between/>

in more detail in works other than *Animal Liberation* (though he does not in *Practical Ethics* (2nd edition), where the discussion is similar to what I have below).

Here is what he says in *Animal Liberation*.

At this point a further objection may be raised. Noting that if we were all vegetarians there would be far fewer pigs, cattle, chickens, and sheep, a few meat-eaters have claimed that they are actually doing the animals they eat a favor, since but for the desire to eat meat, those animals would never have come into existence at all!

In the first edition of this book, I rejected this view on the grounds that it requires us to think that bringing a being into existence confers a benefit on that being – and to hold this, we must believe that it is possible to benefit a nonexistent being. This, I thought, was nonsense. But now I am not so sure. (My unequivocal rejection of this view is, in fact, the only philosophical point made in the earlier edition on which I have changed my mind.) After all, most of us would agree that it would be wrong to bring a child into the world if we knew, before the child was conceived, that it would have a genetic defect that would make its life brief and miserable. To conceive such a child is to cause it harm. So can we really deny that to bring into the world a being who will have a pleasant life is to confer on that being a benefit? To deny this, we would need to explain why the two cases are different, and I cannot find a satisfactory way of doing that.

Singer also thinks that if an animal has a sense of its future, then death *per se* is bad to it. But "in the absence of some sort of mental continuity it is not easy to explain why the loss to the animal killed is not, from an impartial point of view, made good by the creation of a new animal who will lead an equally pleasant life."

The idea here is that when we kill one animal, we compensate by creating *another*. The badness of the first act – causing the first death – is accepted, but we put another act that bears on another animal against it. In *Practical Ethics*, this is called "the replaceability argument." That is different from an argument based on consideration of the package that is the totality of this *one* animals' life, which we were responsible for, from beginning to end. Perhaps the killing of a farmed animal can be justified as part of a practice in which that animal's entire life – a life that is worth living – is brought into being and would not exist otherwise.

I think the difference between the two arguments is important, but it seems common in the literature to not worry much about the distinction.⁹ The name "replaceability argument" certainly pushes away from the option I am talking about here. A *replaceability* argument is different from what can be called a *whole life* argument.¹⁰

Suppose we take a case where a farmed animal's life seems clearly worth living. What would the objection in this case be? Singer says four things about the argument he does discuss (the replaceability argument). We can see whether they might apply here too.

First, he is not sure.

I still have doubts about this issue. The proposition that the creation of one being should somehow compensate for the death of another does have an air of peculiarity. Of course, if we had a clear basis for saying that all sentient creatures have a right to life (even those not capable of having desires about the future) then it would be easy to say why killing a sentient being is a kind of wrong that cannot be made good by creating a new creature. But such a position has its own deep philosophical and practical difficulties, as I and others have indicated elsewhere.

Second, killing animals for food fosters disrespect. It "makes us think of them as objects we can use casually for our own nonessential purposes."

Third, an argument of the kind above would not justify eating factory-farmed animals who suffer through much or all of their lives. Some forms of highly restricted

⁹ In his footnotes Singer discusses a 19th century treatment by Henry Salt. Salt does attack a whole life view. (Salt does two things. Rhetorically, he goes after the really bad cases, where an animal is asked to be grateful for any existence at all, however awful. And he insists that you cannot say that an animal benefits by being brought into existence for a good life. All you can do is ask about good and bad events for animals who are assumed to already exist.) In the latest edition of *Practical Ethics* Singer cites Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* as endorsing a replaceability argument. Pollan in fact uses a sort of mix of the replaceability and whole life arguments, along with others.

Why do people so often move to a replaceability argument? I wonder whether Singer and others might think that the killing of an animal cannot be justified by what has gone *before* (giving the animal a good life), though it might be justified by what comes *after* (replacement). I think the closer attention to the different causal relationships helps sort this out. Delon ("The Replaceability Argument...") discusses versions of both kinds of argument: replacement and (without using a term like this) whole life.

¹⁰ In the Sydney talk I did not give it this name. I talked about a "package deal" that includes a life and a death of a certain kind.

carnivory might be acceptable, though. "At most, the argument from the benefit of bringing a being into existence could justify continuing to eat free-range animals (of a species incapable of having desires for the future), who have a pleasant existence in a social group suited to their behavioral needs, and are then killed quickly and without pain."

But fourth, if you really took these arguments seriously, you'd be a vegetarian, he says, because you would want to bring a lot of *humans* into existence and would want to feed them on plants, as this would support many more people.¹¹

I am not going to reply to the last argument about overall optimization, though I agree that the question is worth considering. I am trying to work out how to think about the acceptability of what I called the whole life view – whether farming of some kinds is something that it's OK for us to do, whether or not, given other assumptions, it is the best possible thing we might do. A central point in this first part of my discussion is that things look different when we consider our productive role in the entire life of the animal, not just our role in its death.

There is also another factor here for me, which is more personal. I have in the past moved some way towards a vegetarian diet, though I did not ever get there, or get as close as I planned. The diet did not work well for me at all. This was partly, I think, because was eating too many carbohydrates and not enough protein. I do much better on a diet with quite a lot of protein, along with fat and fruit, and also, it seems, a diet that includes a fair amount of animal-based food. There are foods that seem to keep my body running well, and foods that don't. It took me some years to work out what sort of diet works for me. I think these things might differ from one person to another.¹²

¹¹ Singer:

If it were good to bring beings into existence then presumably, other things being equal, we ought to bring as many humans as possible into existence too; and if to this we add the view that human lives are more important than the lives of animals – a view the flesh-eater seems sure to accept – then the argument may be turned on its head, to the discomfort of its original proponent. Since more humans may be fed if we do not feed our grain to livestock, the upshot of the argument is, after all, that we ought to become vegetarians!

¹² I was at a conference recently where there was discussion of all these issues, and a person said (as I've often heard said) that adults don't need nearly as much protein as we usually get; someone like me

For Singer, any resistance here is due to *taste*, an aesthetic matter. People resist giving up animals because we "like eating their flesh." It is not just a matter of taste. For me, there seems to be a distinction between the gustatory side and what my body wants. I am reluctant to ignore my body's messages, or what I take to be its messages, about what food is needed and at what times, and animal protein and fat seem to have a distinctive role. I admit that I have also been far too concerned with the aesthetic side. Those pleasures have too much pull. But I think that if all food tasted like nothing, or all tasted the same – if that side of things was lost entirely – the mix of food types I would head towards would not be much different. One has to find a diet that one feels physically at home in. Or: one *might* sacrifice all that, but this decision would not just giving up things that taste good.¹³

I worry that this side of things is so powerful in my case that it might entirely dominate my real responses, so that I rationalize from this basis. A version of me could quietly decide: "It would be better to be a vegan, but I won't sacrifice how my body feels for this." If that was what was going on in me, I would certainly be looking for ways to rationalize it. I do worry about this, so everything I say about these questions of principle might be interpreted with an eye on this possibility. Nonetheless, here is the picture I find myself developing.

I think of the situation in terms of two rounds of decision making. In the first round, we look at the whole lives of farmed animals. We ask: do they have lives worth living at all? In many cases I would say no. This seems clear for modern farming of pigs, which is growing in Australia and huge in the US. It is true of most chickens, both those used for meat and eggs. It is true of feedlot beef, certainly in the US. (I highly

needs about 70 grams per day. That might be all the protein I "need," but that is also less than 300 calories per day in protein. The recommendation implied then, is that protein comprises less than 12% of daily calories, given 2500 calories per day. The rest must come from carbohydrate and fat. A diet like this has me heading quickly into an unsettled, low-energy state. As I said, I think these things probably differ a fair bit from one person to another. And I accept that with effort, a vegan (or more easily, a vegetarian) can eat a high protein diet.

¹³ Regarding Singer's wording: "You like eating their flesh." That does make me uneasy. But the language makes it sound like the animal is alive when it happens. You like eating their *bodies*? Yes. And I don't mind if mine is eaten, too. Bodies are left at the end of life. The question is: at the end of what sort of life, and what sort of end?

recommend Michael Pollan's article "Power Steer.")¹⁴ In the case of sheep I don't know enough, and there are special considerations involving the length of life in that case – lambs raised for food perhaps have a pretty good life but a *very* short one. I'm also unsure about dairy cows. For now, I'll just consider what seem clear cases – the modern and much-criticized forms of pig, chicken, and grain-fed beef farming. Those lives are not worth living. I think a lot of people believe this, too, or believe things that imply it, and it's not hard to show this. Try a reincarnation test. After you die, would you rather come back as that kind of animal or not come back at all? This is obviously an imperfect thought-experiment – given that it in some sense it has to be *you* returning, what sort of mental life do we assume? But in my case, I find that *however* the details are filled out, I find that I'd rather not come back at all, than come back as one of those animals. Their lives are not worth living. Many people seem to agree with this, once the question is raised.

One always wonders about the exaggeration of harms, and perhaps whether farmers and those in government who look after their interests care more about animal suffering than we realize. In an Australian context, whenever one wonders about this, it is salutatory to think for a moment about recent developments around "live export," especially live export of sheep to the Middle East in northern summer. This practice is about as horrific as it could possibly be, with animals frequently being cooked alive in the ships. But evidently many farmers think this is acceptable, and the political representatives of the farmers in the Australian parliament, the National Party and Liberal Party, will not touch them. A *defender* of live export (or at least an emphatic critic of moves to ban it), the Fairfax newspaper journalist David Crowe, recently let slip a bit of information that I'd vaguely wondered about, but had not thought through well enough. How much extra money does each sheep bring in through live export, when compared to that animal's being sold on the local market? The answer is \$20. The animals are put

¹⁴ <https://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/power-steer/>

through hell for an extra \$20.¹⁵ In retrospect, it had to be that way, as the animals are being shipped to communities that are not rich, and the final retail price puts a cap on what can be made by the farmers.

That was a bit of a digression, and specific to the Australian context. A lot of other countries don't do things like this. This example is useful I think in working out who to believe on these issues, and how bad an animal's experience can be without it being regarded by producers as too awful for a practice to continue.

So in the first round of decision-making we look at the lives of farmed animals, and ask whether they are worth living. There is quite a large category of treatment that is indefensible in these terms, and we should do what we can to bring it to an end. Then, as I see it, there is a "round two" of further choices. When I say this, I imagine that round one has been settled – the worst evils have been rejected and we are on our way to ending them. The round two choices that follow are dependent on questions where there is much more disagreement and sheer diversity of outlook. They involve questions about what relationships we want to have with animals and the course of their lives, including their deaths.

¹⁵ The Crowe article, posted on May 17, 2018, was headlined "Taking time of the essence in live sheep trade debate." Here are some quotes from it:

To the dismay of the critics, the trade will continue over the coming weeks – the northern summer, when conditions will be at their worst.

This can be cast as a decision that throws morality overboard in the pursuit of money. But what is the moral argument for telling people in Kuwait, Qatar and Israel that they should be denied food because they want to slaughter sheep on their land in accordance with their religious beliefs?

Farmers who sell sheep for live export might get about \$130 per head for an animal that has already produced wool for about five years. This could be \$20 more than selling mutton on the local market.

It is extraordinary that Labor will go to the next election with a policy that shuts down an industry.

So it seems that the amount is \$20 *at most*.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/taking-time-of-the-essence-in-live-sheep-trade-debate-20180517-p4zfy0.html>

Suppose animals of some kind, under our control, are given constrained but peaceful lives without much physical suffering, and are then killed for food. One possible response to this situation is to concede that the animals have a life worth living, but we still should not be doing this sort of thing, as this is the wrong relationship to bring into being. It is wrong not because it will harm our own character (as argued by Kant) or because it will make the animals miserable (it won't), but just because this is not how the relationships should be.

Some particular recent events got me thinking about a second round of this kind. A few months ago a paper was published in which octopuses were given the drug MDMA, also known as "ecstasy," to see how they would behave. I don't think the experiment caused a great deal of suffering, and the findings were at least somewhat interesting. But was there still something wrong here? There seems a profound indignity in the whole affair, in the role the animal is made to have. Is that a reason not to do it?

A different view of the farm animal case just above is that once the animal has a life of reasonable length that is worth living, the relationship we have created is not problematic. It is a higher-tech descendant of a quasi-contractual relationship that humans formed with some animals about ten thousand years ago. The relationship has real reciprocity in it, and if the animal lives a decent life then it does not involve a betrayal. When I again apply the "reincarnation test" that I used above, I find I'd rather come back as an animal on one of the best humane farms than not come back at all.

Is there dignity in these animals' lives? Only a particular conception of the situation will put dignity on the table as even relevant, as giving us a question to ask. To approach things this way is to import into the animal context a moral category that has a home in human social life, and put this concept into a domain where the normal preconditions for its use are not met. You can treat your employees with dignity, but farm animals? The example of dignity is useful because I find myself thinking that it *is* a possible decision a person could make, to want to constrain their relationships with animals in this way. It's a decision I find myself taking seriously, even though I know it is miles away from ordinary consideration of welfare. This is a coherent round two choice – wanting your relationships with animals to have this feature.

I think the same situation obtains with the frequently-made appeals to *exploitation* – the idea that humane farming is bad because it is still exploitation. This description is usually given in a way that is intended to rationally compel: "You have to admit that this is exploitation, and you hence should not support it." The idea of "exploitation" – in a morally loaded sense, as opposed to the purely descriptive sense seen when we might "exploit" a convenient supply of sand when building something – is another import from human social affairs. I don't accept it, in an immediate way, as something that rationally compels in this context. Instead I see an *invitation* here, an invitation to decide to form a particular kind of relationship with animals. I see the coherence and sense in the invitation, but that is different.

A woman named Anna (no last name given) commented on my *Metazoan.net* blog, about the octopus experiment I mentioned above:¹⁶

... This is simply yet another manifestation of our habitually violent, selfishly anthropocentric and completely delusional thinking that non-human animals are here to serve our purposes.

From moral point of view, all animal exploitation is equally unjust. We have no biological need to eat, wear or use animals and their products.

If we agree that sentient animals are not things, our only rational response should be to stop using them altogether and admit we are morally obligated to go vegan.

I don't accept the talk of "obligation" in this round two context. I am not completely on board with "obligation" talk in round one, either, but round one is different and firmer. There, we can appeal to a range of evaluative outlooks that differ quite a lot on details, and find common ground in the judgment that many modern farming practices should end. In round two, as I see it, we are each of us trying to work out what relationship we want to have with animals and their lives and deaths, assuming that the worst evils have been rejected. In the second round we ask: what role is there, if any, for a kind of custodianship or stewardship? When you see cows sunning themselves in a field, protected from predators and looked after, is this part of an appropriate relationship between us and them? We are custodians of those animals for a time, and then we will

¹⁶ <http://metazoan.net/68-octos-on-e/#comment-80656>

kill them – otherwise it would never be economic for us to be custodians. The lives they have would not be lived at all were it not for that economic side. If we were not custodians of this unusual and ultimately violent kind, those fields would be empty of large animals.¹⁷

When I talk about a "choice of relationship" here, I do include a side of the situation that is often over-stated but not entirely absent: the side that has to do with the effects of the relationship on us. The forming of relationships that will affect us, as they develop, include relationships with animals – pets, obviously, and also animals we farm and eat.

This second round also shades off into purely sentimental attachments, which I see as different, though the boundary is vague. For example, above I said that I think eating sustainable wild-caught fish is fine. We are difference-makers in the timing and manner of their deaths in a way that does not bother me a great deal. But I have been learning more about fish – especially their senses and likely experiences – as part of writing a new book, and this attempt to get inside their sensory worlds has led to me turning away from them as food, to some extent, at least for now. That is something that I see as outside reasoned argument even of the round two kind.

When I treat all this as a series of "choices," how much do I think is really going to change, given the role of wealthy business interests and, in addition, the fact that factory farmed meat is very cheap? If we have high standards for what counts as acceptable treatment of farm animals, then questions of class privilege start to come into view. Not everyone can afford to eat in the ultra-selective sort of way I am heading towards. In practical terms, I think that some problems will only be alleviated with the advance of lab-grown meat. But it is also possible to chip away democratically at the

¹⁷ In Michael Pollan's response to Singer in his book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, he emphasizes the idea that domestication was a symbiosis; the animals were using us as much as we were using them. Farmed animals benefitted from our care and became numerous as a result. I think that Pollan's use of this theme is perhaps exaggerated, given the coercion that was probably in place even in the early days. He also says that human-aided ecological dominance is a kind of good for farmed animals themselves – for those *kinds* of animals, or species. But that kind of dominance would be facilitated as well or more by factory farming, so I see the animals saying: "If this is success, you can keep it."

worst practices one by one. As California has shown, this piecemeal, case-by-case approach has the capacity to generate majority support for reform.¹⁸

I'll now start to sum up. I think of the situation, again, in terms of two rounds of decision-making. The first one has both a political side and a side that involves individual choice. We can decide that, in farming, we should not create lives of misery. Many different views on the details of what is desirable in life, economic affairs, and relationships will have this as a point of intersection. That fact is a basis for political argument and action to change the rules. Then there is round two, where we ask about the relationships we want with animals, given that the form of farming that remains an option is a humane form. In this second round, the issues are not so clear, ongoing diversity of opinion is likely, and political enforcement is perhaps more problematic in principle. Given that we're imagining, in round two, having already moved against the worst evils, I am not sure how problematic it is that round two attitudes will differ.

Here are my own round two attitudes, for now. As discussed earlier, a concept that many people put in a central role here is *exploitation* – they appeal to the badness of exploitation. I do not agree with this as an attempt to argumentatively compel, and am not entirely on board with it as an invitation to reconsider the relationships, either, at least for now. I think a model based on ideas of reciprocity and custodianship is reasonable. While the evil of exploitation is not vivid to me, what is vivid is the evil of betrayal, which I think much modern farming embodies. Factory farmed animals are the victims of something like an immense betrayal. This concept is, again, an import from a different context of social relations, but so are many of the other concepts relevant to the second round of choice, and I see it as a reasonable basis for decisions about animals.

I don't presently envisage moving towards near-veganism of the kind Singer advocates, though I think my behavior should change. I should do much better at avoiding products of cruel practices, and more fully support policy initiatives that relate to round one. But I am OK with both animal custodianship of the best kind, and with wild-catching of many kinds. These decisions may be affected by the fact that I have a

¹⁸ For lab-grown meat: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/lab-grown-meat/>
For the case-by-case approach in California: https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/california-prop-12-farm-animals-cage-free_us_5be31a73e4b0dbe871a5f5b3

somewhat relaxed attitude to death. Many people who write in this area appear to have a horror of death of a kind I do not share. I am comfortable with being a part of an omnivorous web, and with a cycle of birth and death in which turnover and consumption are integral to the system. Given this turnover, the end of any individual's passage of experience is death, and when lives are lived in a way fully engaged with the world, many deaths will not be peaceful or pleasant. Rather than adopting veganism, what I expect to do is become an eccentric eater who navigates through these problems in a different way, accepting also that my behavior will be affected by the quirks of my body as I perceive them. Scrupulously produced humane meat and other animal products do exist, along with game meat. Accept expense and inconvenience. Travel less. Keep thinking about our relationships with animals, with life and death, with one's body. Navigate through it reflectively.
