

PRINCIPLES and PRACTICES of MORAL LEADERSHIP

Topic: “Would it be morally permissible for *you* to start a factory farm or slaughterhouse?” and related questions about the ethical treatment of animals.

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This document is available here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1W66EC2CMKtDIwsZDkJ9tc7DgNphtVMrUdUn6QRahPoY/edit?usp=sharing>

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: PRINCIPLES and PRACTICES of MORAL LEADERSHIP

"Moral leaders are people who act with integrity, imagination, and courage for the common good while inviting others to join them. We will focus on the virtues and traits, ethical reasoning and action, and the outcomes associated with people whom we consider to be moral leaders.

What are the practices and habits of these moral leaders? What are the outcomes that moral leaders intend, enable and achieve?

The course will entail practical inquiry into a special kind of leadership and offer an opportunity to understand and cultivate your own motivations, aptitudes, and capacities for providing moral leadership. We aim to inquire into 'how and why people become "transformed nonconformists."

Our questions:

- Would it be morally permissible for a “moral leader” to start and maintain a **factory farm** or a **slaughterhouse**? Or would that be morally wrong? **WHY?**
- Would it be morally permissible for a “moral leader” to start and maintain a **so-called “humane farm”** or slaughterhouse? Or would that be morally wrong? **WHY?**
- Would it be morally permissible for a “moral leader” to start and maintain a competitor to [Elwood’s Dog Meat’s farm](#)? Or would that be morally wrong? (If so, would it also be wrong to raise and kill cows, pigs, chickens, and other animals?). **WHY?**
- Would a “moral leader” buy and eat meat, and other animal-based food products *in most circumstances they are actually in*? Would a moral leader be a **vegetarian or a vegan**? **WHY?**

In general, what would a moral leader *do* (**actions; behaviors**), and what kind of person would a moral leader *be* (**character traits, virtues; “personal style” of engagement—how they interact with others and view them**)?

These are our questions: they don’t have to be about any animals’ “Right to Equal Consideration” (of interests?) since we can answer these questions without appealing to “rights” or “equal” consideration: *some* consideration may be enough.

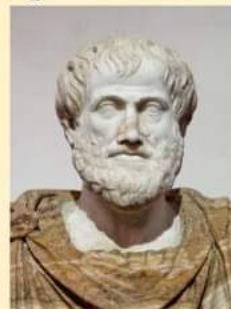
How to answer our questions; some methods:

WHAT'S PHILOSOPHY?

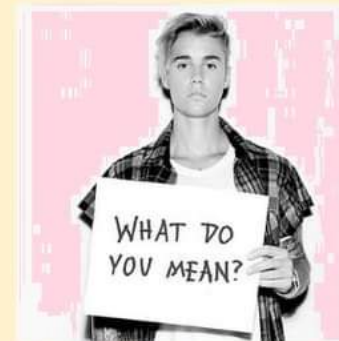
- Reasons
- Arguments
- Evidence
- Consistency
- Integrity, Seriousness

Philosophy:
People say stuff.
We ask, "Why?"
Are they right?

Two questions, two thinkers:



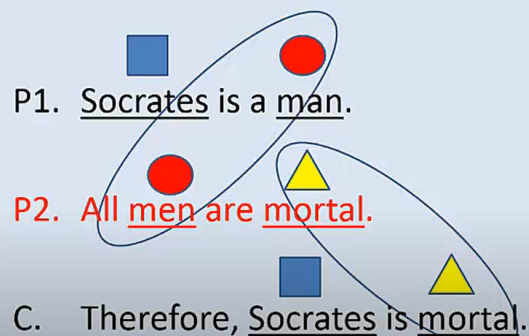
Aristotle: *Why think that?*



Bieber: *What do you mean?*

$$\frac{Pa \quad \forall x(Px \rightarrow Qx)}{\therefore Qa}$$

To visualize the pattern (with 'all'):



Moral Arguments: Syllogisms

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<https://makingmoralprogress.blogspot.com/>

About me:

Nathan Nobis, Ph.D.

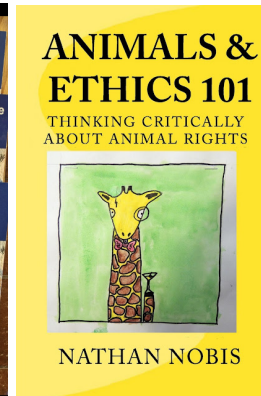
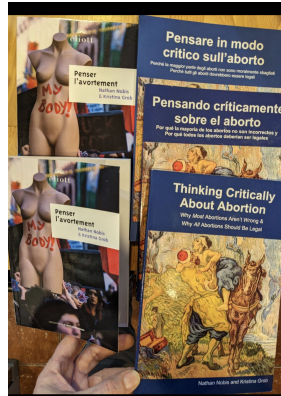
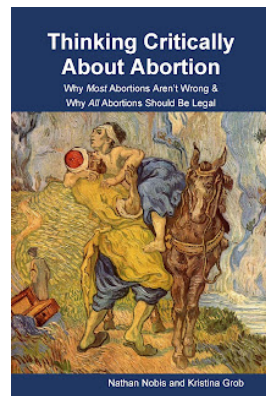
Professor of Philosophy, Morehouse College, www.NathanNobis.com

1000-Word Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology: 1000WordPhilosophy.com

Thinking Critically About Abortion: AbortionArguments.com

Animals & Ethics 101: AnimalEthics101.com

**1000
Word**
P H I L O
S O P H Y



My overall goal is to improve people's skills at engaging complex and challenging moral issues:

**“The ultimate measure of a [person] is not where [they] stand in moments of convenience and comfort,
but where [they] stand at times of challenge and controversy.”**

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

Back to our questions:

- Would it be morally permissible for a “moral leader” to start and maintain a **factory farm** or a **slaughterhouse**? Or would that be morally wrong? **WHY?**
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Some caveats:

- Asking these questions about *us*, where we are and what we have, *not* people at the south pole or in a plane crashed in the mountains. “Whatabout if there was NOTHING else to eat besides animals and you were starving?”
 - So, the concern is whether raising animals to kill them to be eaten and eating them are **prima facie** wrong, not “absolutely” or “necessarily” wrong.
<https://www.tiktok.com/@nathan.nobis/video/7081705223470714155>
- Practical ethical issues depend on an understanding of the **facts**. Here we’d need to know:
 - Facts about how animals are treated in farms and slaughterhouses.
 - Facts about animals: what they are alike, what their cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are.
 - Facts about the environmental and [climate-change related impact of animal agriculture](#).
 - Facts about [nutrition](#):

Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Vegetarian Diets



ABSTRACT

It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits for the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes. Plant-based diets are more environmentally sustainable than diets rich in animal products because they use fewer natural resources and are associated with much less environmental damage. Vegetarians and vegans are at reduced risk of certain health conditions, including ischemic heart disease, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, certain types of cancer, and obesity. Low intake of saturated fat and high intakes of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, soy products, nuts, and seeds (all rich in fiber and phytochemicals) are characteristics of vegetarian and vegan diets that produce lower total and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels and better serum glucose control. These factors contribute to reduction of chronic disease. Vegans need reliable sources of vitamin B-12, such as fortified foods or supplements.

J Acad Nutr Diet. 2016;116:1970-1980.

POSITION STATEMENT

It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes. Plant-based diets are more environmentally sustainable than diets rich in animal products because they use fewer natural resources and are associated with much less environmental damage.

Some influential and important “affirmative” answers to our questions:

“It’s prima facie wrong to start a factory farm or slaughterhouse; it’s wrong to start a so-called “humane” harm *and* it’s wrong to buy and eat meat *because*”:

Peter Singer's arguments, from anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-speciesism:

FROM PETER SINGER'S *ANIMAL LIBERATION*:



1. Racism and sexism are wrong.
2. If racism and sexism is wrong, then *speciesism* is wrong.
[Why? Because they all deny the *principle of equal consideration of interests .. that anyone's similar interests deserve equal consideration to anyone else's*]
3. So speciesism is wrong.
4. So, it's wrong to raise and kill animals to eat them, as its speciesist.

Youtube: [Peter Singer's "Animal Liberation" and "All Animals Are Equal"](#)
[TikTok video by Nathan Nobis on Peter Singer.](#)

Tom Regan's arguments, *from* human rights to animal rights (via rights for “subjects of lives”):

FROM TOM REGAN'S *THE CASE FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS*



1. Human beings have *moral* rights.
2. If human beings have *moral* rights, then (*many*) animals have moral rights.
[Why? Because human beings have rights because they are ‘subject of lives’ – conscious and feeling beings, with a perspective and welfare of their own, and so are many animals]
3. So (many) animals have rights.
4. So, it's wrong to raise and kill animals to eat them.

Youtube: [Tom Regan's Human Rights and Animal Rights](#)

[TikTok video by Tom Regan on animal rights.](#)

Harm-based arguments and arguments from analogy to other animals:

SIMPLER, “COMMON SENSE” ARGUMENTS:



1. It's wrong to cause (a) harms that are (b) unnecessary or unjustified.
2. Animals (and humans) are *harmed* when raised and killed to be eaten.
3. These harms are *unnecessary* (for life, health, and pleasure) and so are unjustified. [?]
4. So animals are treated wrongly, when raised and killed to be eaten.

Suggestion: try to reason from less controversial assumptions or premises:

- A. It'd be wrong to raise **cats and dogs** to kill and eat them.
- B. So it's wrong to raise and kill **cows, chickens and pigs** to eat them.

<https://www.elwooddogmeat.com/>

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ELWOOD'S ORGANIC DOG MEAT

Delicious dog, since 1981.

Why dog?

Arguments from virtue and character:

What are (morally *and intellectually*) better people like?

One set of answers:

- compassionate (to other's sufferings);
- considerate;
- empathetic;
- caring;
- fair and just (operationalized: they don't treat individuals or groups differently *for no good reason*);
- informed (and not informed by confirmation bias and fake news); seeks to understand;
- motivated to avoid harming others and disrespecting them; motivated to promote good things;
- honest (they don't "rationalize" inaction or bad behaviors);
- consistent; integrity; seriousness about important matters;
- courage;
- *what else?*

The thought: would a *better* person, like this above, raise and kill animals so they can be eaten, when they don't really need to? (*Or would such a person be rather selfish, cruel, uncaring, unfair, uninformed, and more?*).
Would such a person buy animals' bodies and/or eat those bodies? Or ...?

Objections and Questions:

“Rationalizing meat consumption: the 4 N’s”:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0195666315001518?via%3Dihub>

EATING MEAT IS NOT WRONG SINCE IT'S NATURAL, NORMAL, NECESSARY, AND/OR NICE?

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. Eating meat is “natural.” | i. Eating meat is ‘necessary.’ |
| 2. All “natural” actions are not wrong. | ii. All “necessary” actions are not wrong. |
| 3. Therefore, eating meat is not wrong. | iii. Therefore, eating meat is not wrong. |
| | |
| A. Eating meat is “normal” | a. Eating meat is ‘nice’ (= pleasurable). |
| B. All “normal” actions are not wrong. | b. All ‘nice’ actions are not wrong. |
| C. Therefore, eating meat is not wrong. | c. Therefore, eating meat is not wrong. |

Similar simple arguments (rationalizations?):

- People make money producing and selling meat. *Any action people make money at is not wrong.* (False!)
- Meat tastes good; it produces pleasure for me!! *Any action that brings you pleasure is not wrong.* (False!)

- Eating meat is a tradition. *All traditions are morally permissible.* (False!)
- Eating meat is “essential” to many cultures. (False?). *All things essential to a culture are not wrong.* (False!)

A concern: It's easy for some to be vegan or vegetarian. For others, it's less easy. For some, it's not easy and it might be practically impossible.

Questions:

- How is 'easy' measured? **If you are in this class, it's very likely not that hard for you to be vegetarian or vegan: lots of people do it, and so could you.**
- When can an action become so *not-easy* that it's not a moral obligation that we do it? If people can't do something, then they are not obligated to do it! **"Ought implies can"**!

Related discussion:

Checking 'Check Your Privilege' for Veganism: Why the 'Privilege,' 'Food Deserts,' and 'Cost' Excuses Usually Don't Excuse:

<https://www.nathannobis.com/2020/07/checking-check-your-privilege-for.html>

A concern: What can one little person do?

The concern:

“Markets” here are very big and not very “sensitive.” **If you personally don’t *buy* some animal products, will that *cause fewer animals to be harmed*?**

Can it be that we are morally obligated to be vegan, even if our individually being vegan won’t *directly* reduce harms (to animals)?

Some proposals:

- It’s wrong to support wrongdoing, especially when you easily not support that wrongdoing. Better people do this, even if they are unsure of the results: they disassociate from wrongdoing.
- “Transformed nonconformists” are leaders: they help bring about the “critical masses” that are needed for broad social change.

What are other issues and questions that you'd like to discuss?

Here's one: Making moral change is hard. People don't like change. People don't like being "told" that they *should* change and why (yet it really is true that, sometimes, people *should* change, right?): people are defensive.

So what are the best ways for would-be social-change-makers to engage with people?

- Being too "pushy" can be counterproductive; yet not being *at all* "pushy" wouldn't produce much either.
- Having high expectations and goals is important, but also being realistic about expectations is also important: what's the ideal balance?
- Other challenges?

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.

Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly now.

You are not obligated to complete the work,
but neither are you free to abandon it.

- the Talmud

Related materials and for further reading and viewing:

- *Animals & Ethics 101*: www.AnimalEthics101.com
- Video: Youtube: [Peter Singer's "Animal Liberation" and "All Animals Are Equal"](#)
 - [TikTok video by Nathan Nobis on Peter Singer.](#)
- Video: Youtube: [Tom Regan's Human Rights and Animal Rights](#)
 - [TikTok video by Tom Regan on animal rights.](#)
- Reading: “[Speciesism](#)” by Dan Lowe
- Video: “[Their Future is in your hands](#)” by Animal Aid
- Video: “[My Friends at the Farm](#),” Farm Sanctuary
- Video: [Farm to Fridge by Mercy for Animals \(The Truth About Meat Production\)](#); (4-minute version)
- “[Reasonable Humans and Animals](#)” by John Simmons
 - [TikTok video by Nathan Nobis on an argument for veganism.](#)
- [Abstract of the Position of *The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*: Vegetarian Diets](#)